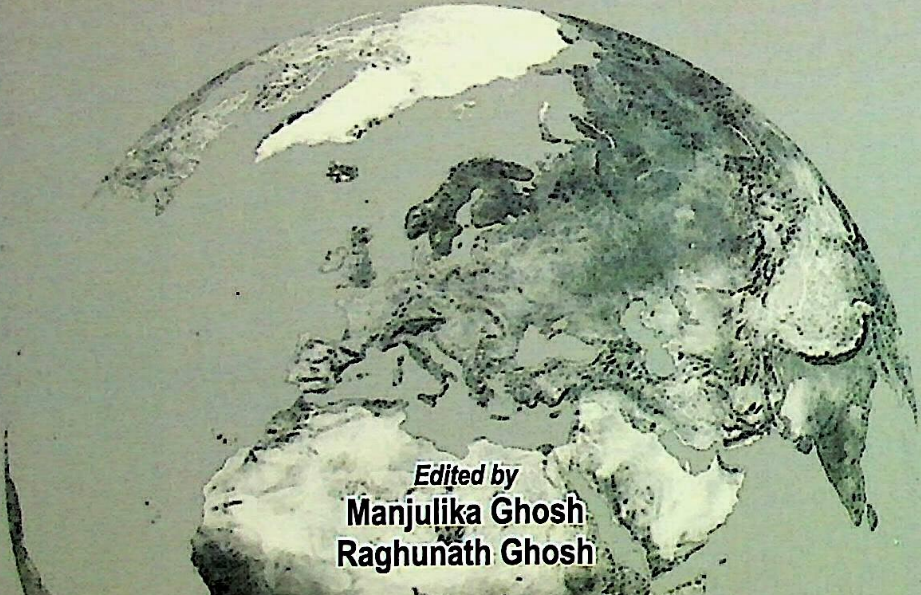
Language and Interpretation:

Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective



Edited by
Manjulika Ghosh
Raghunath Ghosh

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The volume has a two-fold purpose: *(i)* to acquaint the Indian readers and academic community with some prominent trends in hermeneutics and text interpretation coming from veteran and young scholars in the field and *(ii)* to create an interest in the current research undertaken by Indian scholars in the field of philosophy and allied disciplines. This is deemed important because hermeneutics, though established in the West, is still in its infancy in the academic circles and is accorded an auxiliary status as a less significant concern.

The sincere readers of these essays are hoped to bring to them their own perspectives and understanding, which is to say that every reader will have his own hermeneutical exercise and engagements. This volume will be of use to the beginners as well as the discerning scholars in the domain of hermeneutics.

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Language and Interpretation :
Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective

In Memory of
Chinmoy Goswami,
who had been a good friend and colleague

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Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective

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Manjulika Ghosh
Raghunath Ghosh

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Editors' Preface

The papers collected in the Volume entitled: "*Language and Interpretation : Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective*" formed part of the proceedings of the ICPR-sponsored National Seminar on "Language, Interpretation and Understanding: Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective", held in the Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal, in March, 2005. The Volume is Published under the auspices of the UGC Special Assistance Programe in Philosophy at the University of North Bengal. We, the editors, thank the writers of the papers for giving their consent to publish the same. We also thank ICPR, New Delhi for its formal approval regarding publication.

Despite their variety, there are certain unifying principles that underlie this collection of papers. They address hermeneutics, as a philosophical method and a philosophical discipline, its key concepts, core issues and their ramifications, sometimes in an idiocyncratic manner too. Questions are also raised about the presence or prospect of 'philosophical hermeneutics' in India.

The papers are not grouped according to any criteria — there being a lot of criss-crossing and overlapping of ideas. What we have attempted to do is to provide a rough sketch of the main points of importance in the papers themselves before the volume reaches the wider audience.

Professor Krishna Roy's paper, "The Inevitable Interpretation and its proper Implementation", addresses hermeneutics at a basic level — interpretation of language. Interpretation in an extended sense is inevitably bound up with our being and consciousness, she holds. Interpretation, however, is primarily of language. This gives rise to controversial questions like whether interpretation is objective or subjective; whether there is a single right interpretation or not. The answer depends on what is meant by interpretation. If it means mere deciphering the meaning already in the text, there is singularism — interpretation is guided by etymology and grammatical principles, which are same for all the interpreters. If interpretation is conferring meaning on the text, it is free and creative, and diverse meanings may be conferred on the text from different socio-cultural milieu. Professor Roy sees the possibility of reconciliation of the two senses, multiple interpretations not being impossible even within the parameters of etymology and morphology. This is corroborated with reference to texts in Sanskrit language in the East and text interpretation in the Western tradition. She refers to the norms formulated by hermeneutic philosophers in the West and in ancient India for proper and systematic interpretation of texts. In fact, hermeneutics in the shape of interpretative principles and methodological devises was practiced by Indians of antiquity much earlier than it was in the West.

In his paper "Hermeneutics and Phenomenology", Professor Kalyan Kumar Bagchi takes cognisance of the complex mosaic which hermeneutics has grown into. Hermeneutics today has become a new discipline of interpretation in which the role of the interpreter, his tradition and history, the question of different and often conflicting interpretations and related questions form part. Two important points raised by Professor Bagchi are: (1) How is hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation to be distinguished from semantics? How is the Gricean "hearer" to be distinguished from the hermeneutical "interpreter"? The answer he gives is that the Gricean scheme falls short of the hermeneutic requirement. The "hearer" in a theory of meaning is no "interpreter" as in a theory of interpretation. (2) The fact that different interpretations of the same text are there is not a matter to be despaired of. They constitute one horizon of interpretation. Professor Bagchi makes the important observation as to how hermeneutics has brought forth the importance of the study of history of philosophy. The hermeneutic exercise brings about an experiential shift in the hermeneut, which in the long run establishes the relationship between hermeneutics and phenomenology. This phenomenological core of interpretation, he claims, is as old as Kant for whom the world-interpretative categories are but steps in the self-authenticating of consciousness. However, Professor Bagchi does not elucidate or explicate quite a few insightful cryptic remarks of his and this we consider to be our loss.

Professor Binod Kumar Agarwala's paper "Hermeneutic Experience and the Law of Karma" opens with the issue of modernity as viewed by Gadamer. Modernity is constituted by a transformation in the nature of experience. Modernity has led to the destruction of experience in a robust sense, *Erfahrung*, and to the establishment of experience in two senses: a thinner form of immediacy, *Erlebnis* of social sciences and a positivist experience of natural sciences. The kind of experience to which *Erfahrung* refers is not something like the sedimented moments of the elements of experience in the consciousness of a subject, but rather it is a continuous process of integration and negation that every experience requires in its integration into whole life. *Erfahrung* is something the subject undergoes and suffers. The dialectical negativity and the openness of experience to new experience are essential elements of *Erfahrung*. Hermeneutic experience, i.e., *Erfahrung*, shares in the nature of conversation, and also contains the structure of question and answer. The hermeneutic experience is concerned with what has been transmitted in tradition. The temporal distance between us, the transmitted tradition, ensures the polarity of familiarity and strangeness, and this is the place where we have hermeneutic experience. The temporal distance solves the critical problem of distinguishing the true prejudices from the false ones. This complex process, Professor Agarwala says, involves what Indian thinkers called "The law of *Karma*". Professor Agarwala gives a very interesting hermeneutic interpretation of the law of *Karma*, *Karmas* forming a *Karmāśaya*. The hermeneutic situation is the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition we are trying to understand. The understanding of the situation can never be completed. *Karmāśaya* in Indian philosophy is something which envelops us and our consciousness. We are always within it. To throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed. There is no overcoming of the law of *Karma*.

Another interesting point of comparison is brought about between understanding as the fusion of historical horizons and the fusion effected by the consciousness governed by the law of *Karma*. This takes place, according to Agarwala, by way of *Karmavipāka*, through the logic of question and answer as within the hermeneutic experience. He maintains that a hermeneutical situation is determined by prejudices, *Saṁskāra*, *Apūrva* and *Adṛṣṭa* as *Prārabdha*. We have to test continually all our prejudices, giving rise to alternative possibilities. So the fusion of horizon, in the Indian philosophical context is the exhaustion of the *Prārabdha* in the hermeneutical experience and the transition of some *anārabdha Karma* and also of *sañcīyamāna Karma* to the stage of new *Prārabdha Karma*. Agarwala compares principle of effective history in Gadamer with the law of *Karma* in Indian philosophy. Agarwala's endeavour highlights the possibility of comparative philosophy in the zone of hermeneutics.

Professor Chinmoy Goswami's paper on "Understanding the Story of Understanding" deals with the concept of understanding from a wide angle, not being confined to its hermeneutical technical significance only. He avers that understanding is closely related to expressiveness which again is addressed to an other through language — speech, imagery, signals, etc. Understanding is basically ''selfing the other and othering the self''. This means for an expression like ''X understands Y'' a subject-predicate analysis is likely to fail. We have to adopt an *intensional* analysis where we intend to play with the different shades of understanding, a success-failure drama.

What makes understanding unproblematic in everyday life is the shared culture, the culture-bound norms and practices. This has its risk of leading to cultural relativism which standardizes the individual. In actual practice, cultures, sub-cultures, fragments of culture meet and interact. With each culture, again, the individual responds differently on the basis of his/her interpretation of cultural *inputs.*

Professor Goswami observes the overwhelming desire in some quarters to coalesce understanding into *The Understanding* — the desire to overlook difference and homogenize understanding to a static and framed exhibit. It then, looses its transitivity, the agent's constant negotiations with the patient.

Once we agree to consider understanding as a process, always in the making, rather than an event, frozen in the past we are obliged to accept levels of understanding. Every disagreement need not point to the failure of understanding. On the contrary, differences within limit, and tolerance with the differences, is more likely to provide us with a deeper, better and richer understanding of language.

Professor Gautam Biswas' paper entitled: ''Language and Disclosure of Meaning'' argues for a phenomenology of language, which need not bypass the positionality of language and meaning, nor would it ignore the anthropological dimension of freedom, surplus of humans. Linguistic hegemony contests the creativity and criticality and inter-positionality of language, and subverts the disclosure of meaning. Biswas works towards a phenomenology of language which deviates from the structuralist approach of Saussure's kind, and seeks to establish the link between speaking subjects and the world in terms of 'living meaning' of words and positionality of subject. He explicates the link between language, speech and communication with the help of M. Bakhtin's concept of speech genres, which is balanced between extremes of foundationalism and non-foundationalism, absolute autonomy of language and meaning from culture and society, and complete dependence upon them.

Biswas' proposal for phenomenological treatment of language goes beyond conventional philosophical methods and incorporates *critical pragmatics*. The inter-positionality of language and meaning and critical pragmatics unfold the hermeneutical possibilities of any sentence/utterance/text. Hermeneutical activity in its philosophical sense requires a philosophical anthropological commitment and an existential base of language and meaning. That will counter subversive attempts to demean language as a human phenomenon.

In his paper, ''Hermeneutics and Social Science : Erklaren *Versus* Verstehen'', Professor Sarad Deshpande deals with the hermeneutic challenge to the positivistic conception of social sciences. The conception that the task of social science is different radically from that of natural science was highlighted in terms of the introduction of a distinction between *Erklaren* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) by Droysen (1858) and by Dilthey (1883). Deshpande carefully follows the different stages in the *Erklaren-Verstehen* controversy in respect of the autonomy claim of historical social sciences where one looks for motives, intentions, purposes, meaning, etc., as against causal explanation and prediction in natural sciences. Even though the two terms, i.e., *Erklaren* and *Verstehen* are often used interchangeably in the context of human action, action explanations are not species of scientific explanation. We cannot explain why-questions in the domain of human actions in a straightforward sense. Deshpande appears to concur with von Wright's view that we understand human actions and account for them in terms of reasons. This explains human agency and responsibility for actions.

Dr. Kumar Mitra's paper ''Language, Language-understanding and Communication'' is written, as the sub-title shows, from a Chomskian perspective. Though the Chomskian perspective of language-understanding is not understanding in the hermeneutic tradition, yet there may be points of intersection among different and competing approaches to language and its understanding. Mitra discusses the different aspects of Chomsky's theory and holds that besides the syntactic and semantic components, pragmatic knowledge about sentences and knowledge about the world may be required to produce a fuller interpretation of how we produce and understand novel sentences. Alongside the 'grammar' and the 'lexicon' of a particular language, the 'cultural grammar' is also to be learnt.

Dr. Kanchana Mahadevan's paper 'Gadamerian Hermeneutics: Between Strangers and Friends'' invokes the concepts of familiarity and strangeness also referred to in Agarwala's paper. It is in essence an attempt to explore the implications of Gadamer's hermeneutics for a reflective and democratic approach to tradition. In this endeavour, the first part of the paper examines the thesis that his hermeneutics affirms an uncritical affiliation to tradition. She refers to Georgia Warnke's remark that this thesis underlies both Rorty's celebration of Gadamer's edifying philosophy and Habermas' indictment of its unreflective attitude to tradition. Mahadevan, however, argues that this thesis cannot be sustained considering that Gadamer treats understanding and interpretation as a creative process for which cultural belonging is hardly unproblematic. Instead, she maintains that the understanding and interpretation of a tradition also contributes to its production. Gadamer's contention that tradition is not a readymade given is especially significant from the feminist point of view.

The second part of the paper illustrates these Gadamerian themes with reference to the historian Romila Thapar's account of the Sanskrit literary work *Śakuntalā*, whose many versions are produced through a dialogue with the past. The specific *Śakuntalā* that is appropriated from the past depends upon contemporary feminist concerns.

In its final part, the paper examines the problem of ethnocentrism that lurks in Gadamers's hermeneutics. It argues that his parochialism is not the outcome of an avowed unflinching allegiance to tradition, as Rorty and Habermas maintain. It is instead because Gadamer construes friendship as the paradigm of dialogue that he implicitly subscribes to enthnocentrism. The latter is especially troubling from the feminist point of view. Mahadevan concludes that it is only by moving beyond friendship towards a conversation with strangers that dialogue can accommodate feminist concerns consistently.

In his critically incisive and closely argued paper "Extrapolating Hermeneutics and its Circle of Understanding" Professor P.K. Mukhopadhyay has developed an extensive and profound analysis of the position he is articulating. Mukhopadhyay expresses his deep sense of misgivings about the alleged tendencies observable among some Indian scholars *(i)* who practice harmeneutics under the expressed belief that hermeneutics had been in India for a long time, *(ii)* those who are searching for the presence of hermeneutics in India and *(iii)* hermeneutics itself. The aim of his paper is to explain and justify some of these misgivings.

Mukhopadhyay's attempt in this direction consists in projecting philosophy as a product of culture, there being certain cultural determinants in shaping its form and nature. The relevant cultural determinants, modern science and science-dominated modern epistemology, foundationalism to be precise, that necessitated the development of hermeneutics in the West were never a part of the philosophical culture in India. Undoubtedly, there is a long tradition of text interpretation in India. But this does not engender the conclusion that it was hermeneutics. Classical India had her own science too, but there was no evidence of the presence of any opposition to it in the way in which there was in the hermeneutic concerns of the West. Modern India, Mukhopadhyay contends, has, in some quarters, a strong opposition to science. But without a proper analysis of its features, we cannot 'jump to the conclusion' that India had or had developed hermeneutics. That would be to indulge in 'facile comparison and over-simplification', observes Mukhopadhyay.

Now, the presence of communication with tradition, without which man would never be able to exist, must, in fact, assume different forms in different cultures, having evolved as parts of epistemology, religion, science, etc. In the West, hermeneutics developed in opposition to science and science-based epistemology — this basic view, Professor Mukhopadhyay has stated with remarkable clarity along with relevant side issues. It may, however, be pointed out that prior to W. Dilthey (1833-1911) hermeneutics in the West was not marked off by its critique of modern science; it rather was an engagement with text interpretation as it is found in Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Humbolt, etc. This, however, does not affect Professor Mukhopadhyay's thesis as he has circumscribed his concern with philosophical hermeneutics merely. The question is whether philosophical hermeneutics can be detatched from general or methodological hermeneutics. Humanism which figures prominently in the critique of modern science in the latter, was a part of classical hermeneutics too, in the West.

Professor Mukhopadhyay observes that within the unity of the Vaidika tradition, a rich variety of interpretation was there. Some of the Indian scholars have also treated so-called hermeneutics as laying down the devices and cannons of interpretation or as interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics in India might also have generated out of grammatical and etymological interests, or from the urge to provide clarificatory accounts, or decoding the meaning of texts of a symbolic nature. We may also recall that texts in classical India were meant for teaching. In essence, the end was clearly pedagogical and pragmatic. Hence, a rational account of the techniques and strategics to be applied to those parts of a given work which appeared obscure or simply difficult to understand had also to be provided. That these may be referred to usually as 'hermeneutics' is a matter of terminology. We may dispense with this expression in the Indian context and have some other appropriate term for the kind of understanding and interpretation of texts that prevailed in India, and is still being undertaken. We may call it *Bhāṣyaśāstra* or *Arthamīmāṁsā.*

Professor Mukhopadhyay hints at many interesting and debatable issues regarding the hermeneutic circle/cycle, limits of interpretation, transcendence of interpretation, etc. One wonders whether the transcendence of interpretation, in the Indian context, in the essential nature of soul culminates in a sort of ontological foundationalism giving rise to its critiques again.

To conclude, a paper of such depth and erudition as this needs full attention and serious probing by all discerning persons in this area for agreeing or disagreeing with it.

Professor Karunasindhu Das in his paper has tried to say that methodology of interpretation has been an interesting study in India for millennia. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya, Abhinavabhāratī* on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra, Supadmamakaranda* on Supadma rules and the like offer us several models of interpretation. *Paribhāṣā*-s of *vyākaraṇa* in various systems play a great role in ascertaining the import of any expression in general and grammatical formulations in particular. Like Pāṇini's, post-Pāṇinian schools have an elaborate arrangement of canons and devices of interpretation of rules. Preference of primary meaning to secondary one, or for that matter, predominance of technical over a non-technical meaning and selection of one from a group and the like are justified thereby. Extended application, option, etc. too are examined in details. Barring the cases of governing rules or parts thereof, *vyākaraṇa* generally confines its deliberations to sentence boundary of individual formulations. In *Mīmāṁsā,* however, a whole discourse consisting of many sentences is treated as a singular unit. A hyperbolic sentence therein, for example, signifies nothing but praise or censure of a relevant injunction. Individual word-meanings are accordingly curved out of the whole to suit the context. Similar devices are adopted in Vedānta so much so that words viz. *setu, ākāśa, prāṇa* etc. mean nothing but *Brahman* in the Upaniṣads.

Professor D.N. Tiwari has commented on Bhatṛhari's observations on Śruti as text in the light of his *Vākyapadīya* and commentaries on it. To him the Veda is the original text that is revealed directly to the seers and sages without a reference to any text written earlier and that serves as the foundation of other texts of the tradition. As revelation comes to the seers who were in constant practice for searching the truth, they are philosophical texts. Interpretation is generally taken as a method handy for clarifying the wisdom of the text having profound indivisible meaning and application. The aphoristic expressions can be understood to the beginners only through interpretation. As a grammarian philosopher Bhartṛhari, for whom the text is a concept, a complete unit of awareness, thinks that there is a complete unit of awareness which is indivisible. Such indivisible sentence is interpreted for making it understandable to those who cannot understand the same otherwise.

Dr. Satrughna Behera's paper "Hermeneutics: Some Methodological Claims" attempts to assess the relevance of the phenomenological-hermeneutical approaches and their implications for social and political philosophy. Behera makes also the stronger claim that hermeneutics is indeed another way of doing social and political philosophy. The key to this thesis is the primacy of the concept of linguisticality. Of the different features of it, dialogue is the most important. By virtue of dialogue, hermeneutics may be worked upon to be another way of doing social and political philosophy. In support of his contention Behera discusses the views of Gadamer specifically. Gadamer repeatedly denies that his philosophical hermeneutics is a methodology for human sciences and looks upon it as another way of doing social and political philosophy. This proposition is sought to be defended by (1) hermeneutics as application, and (2) appropriation of Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* as practical and ethical knowledge necessary for man as a political and social being. Behera works his way through Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and post-positivistic philosophy of science. He holds that Kuhn's view of scientific theorizing may be said to be an extension of Gadamer's idea of dialogue as the primordial model representing the primacy of the practial over the technical. Behera rounds off his discussion by referring to Vico, who as early as 1709 voiced the primacy of *phronesis* over *techne.*

M. Parameshwaran's paper on "Understanding, Interpretation and Language: A Reading into Heidegger's Hermeneutics" gives an account of understanding and interpretation traceable in *Being and Time* in relation to traditional hermeneutics. What is distinctive of Heidegger's hermeneutics is that it is an interpretation of the subject as concrete human existence. Besides, Heidegger developed his hermeneutic phenomenology working out Husserl's method. Parameshwaran has provided clear expositions of terms as 'understanding', 'interpretation', the "hermeneutical circle" and critically follows the development of Heidegger's reflexions on language.

T.K. Badrinath's paper on "The Implication of Tradition and Understanding in the Hermeneutic Ontology of H.G. Gadamer" focusses on Gadamer's hermeneutics which grew out of his opposition to science and understanding of tradition. In the concluding part of the paper he shows how tradition, understanding and language are interlocked in Gadamer's hermeneutical enquiry.

Manjulika Ghosh treats the problem of translation as interpreting hermeneutically. To her translation is not only inter-texual but also inter-lingual. This gives rise to the problem of the translation of any text in vernacular language or a foreign language. For a translator interested in a medieval text many challenges are there. The paper is an attempt to approach these and related issues taking special notice of Rabindranath Tagore's translation of the medieval saint-poet Kabir's songs.

Raghunath Ghosh has tried to interpret the concept of being (*sat*) in Indian tradition in a socio-ethical background. Ghosh has tried to provide a hermeneutic approach by taking the derivative meaning of the term '*sat*' and extended meaning of *arthakriyākāritva* (causal efficacy) as a mark of *sat*.

Manjulika Ghosh
Raghunath Ghosh

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1

The Inevitable Interpretation and its Proper Implementation

Krishna Roy

Interpretation is so prevalent in our language, thought and action that we often forget to recognise its importance and significance. As we ponder deeply and seriously, we realize how significant interpretation is. In fact, we realize the inevitability of interpretation. Specially in all our linguistic acts — spoken or written — interpretation is present either implicitly or explicitly, either consciously or unconsciously. There is no freedom from interpretation. Interpretation is a part of our being and consciousness.

As we reflect on the inevitability of interpretation a host of questions comes in, e.g., What is this interpretation? What is being interpreted? Is there one right interpretation or many? etc. Interpretation as an act of consciousness may be understood in two ways. In one sense, interpretation is some conscious act which seeks to decipher or unfold the meanings already lying in the text. In this sense, interpretation includes description, elucidation, exploration and the like. In its other usage, interpretation confers some meaning on the text, and as such, it is a creative reconstruction of the text to be interpreted.

Now comes the question : What is being interpreted? In fact, we interpret everything that we experience, language and texts, facts and phenomena of the world, our own selves and those of others. We interpret all that we experience – we can even say that our experience is interpretative experience; we do not experience anything without interpreting it at the same time.

This interpretativeness is rooted in the very human existence. When man became first self-conscious, he started interpreting nature, others and himself. It is both perennial and universal as it is present in all cultures and at all times. It is not specific to any country or any culture. Though the systematic study about the nature and technique of interpretation may have started at a particular time – the act of interpretation must have started much earlier. In the history of Western hermeneutics, although it has been pointed out that the systematic study of hermeneutics or the art of interpretation started during the period of Reformation, yet the prevalence of such interpretative tendency can be noticed in India much earlier. We know that the Vedas are the foundation of Indian philosophy and culture; all the six major philosophical systems accept the authority of the Vedas – but they interpret the Vedic texts in different ways. What is noteworthy is that in India all these diverse interpretations developed parallelly, almost at the same time. Even accepting the importance and authority of the Vedas, the six systems of philosophy – Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Vedānta and Mīmāṁsā interpret them from their different perspectives. Apart from these alternative interpretations in Indian tradition we also notice enough discussion regarding the art or technique of interpretation. We shall discuss this subsequently.

We have to admit that interpretation is primarily of the language we use. Language is a part of our existence. We describe the facts and phenomena of the world, our own experiences in and through language; we communicate our ideas and feelings through language; we try to understand others and interact with them through language. Language is that which connects us with the world and with others. We speak a language and express in it what we desire and feel; we write in language what we think and believe. Even when we do not speak or write but merely think in our own then also we use language, may be silently. Language, thus, is inevitably connected with our existence, our mode of being in the world. Hence, Gadamer says, ''Language is the element in which we live, as fishes live in water''.[1]

Thus, language is not only the means by which we know and describe the world – it is not merely a tool or a technique. ''Rather in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always already encompassed by the language that is our own. We grow up and we become acquainted with men and in the last analysis with ourselves when we learn to speak. Learning to speak does not mean learning to use a preexistent tool for designating a world already familiar with us; it means acquiring a familiarity and acquaintance with the world itself and how it confronts us''.[2]

Here one may ask: If language is a part of our being, then why do we interpret language? We interpret language, firstly because, such interpretative tendency is rooted in our being – we cannot help doing this. It is because of how we are constituted that we always interpret, and also become interpreted in turn. Yet, there is another reason why we always interpret language – either spoken or written. It is due to the enigmatic and symbolic nature of language that it often requires proper understanding and interpretation. Any thorough study of language will reveal that language spans a range of meanings, is full of depth and significance, and so proper elucidation and analysis is necessary to clarify those tacit and deeper meanings and significations. Interpretation seeks to unfold that which is enfolded. Here, we may mention that language is not merely filled with meanings and messages, but language is also full of preconceptions, prejudices and preferences. Following Heidegger, Gadamer thus accepts that preconceptions and prejudices are not to be taken in a derogatory sense; rather, they are inalienably connected with language, and while interpreting we need to be aware of them. This becomes evident when we interpret a treatise or a text. In order to interpret the text it is necessary first to understand the meaning or the message contained in the text. Such understanding necessitates thorough acquaintance with the language, grammar, syntax, morphology of the language in which the text is written. Here, we are reminded of Schleiermacher's guidelines as to the grammatical interpretation which should be supplemented by psychological interpretation for comprehending the psychological, intellectual and cultural background of the author which, in due course, would intermingle with similar psycho-social milieu of the interpreter. Even though the interpreter wants to be objective and impartial as far as possible it is really doubtful whether it is possible to be fully objective and thoroughly devoid of all subjective factors. When the interpreter tries to understand and interpret a text written in a different period or in a different country, he or she tries to understand the cultural milieu of the author from his or her own socio-intellectual background. A good interpretation, thus, results in a 'fusion of horizons' and becomes the recreation of a creative act.

Now comes the most controversial question regarding the interpretation of a text: Is there a single right interpretation or not? There are some singularists who hold that full understanding can be found in one single interpretation, where there is one to one relation between the interpretation and the object of interpretation. Such singularist or conservative theories have been opposed by liberal theories which deny any such unique interpretation which can confer the right meaning.

The question whether there is a single right interpretation or not is connected with two different 'interpretations' of interpretation, (as discussed at the outset of this paper), i.e., how we understand and implement the act of interpretation itself : First, does interpretation consist in deciphering the meaning or meanings already lying in the text, or does it consist in conferring meaning on the text? If we accept the first usage, then the words and sentences of the text carry some definite meaning and while interpreting the text the interpreter gives emphasis on grammar and etymology primarily. The grammarians and the philologists naturally support this view. If we have to follow only lexicon and word meanings, then the interpreters have to follow, more or less, the same principles or rules, and the task of interpretation is nothing more than merely to unfold and disclose the meanings which are already present in the text. This usage is being favoured by singularism as in this case the interpreter is mainly guided by etymology and grammatical principles, which are same for all interpreters. Hence, this view is more objective and interpretation in this case is mainly decoding, paraphrasing, transliteration and the like.

If we accept the second usage, then interpretation is much more than mere deciphering the meaning contained in the text. In the present case, the interpreter, rather, confers meaning on the text. According to this view, the words, sentences and sequences of scripts present in the text become meaningful only when a mind or a community of minds confers meaning on it. Here, the interpreter is more free and creative; he or she not merely understands the text but recreates it anew. Moreover, since the mind which confers meaning does so from a socio-cultural milieu, many diverse meanings may be conferred on the same text. The supporters of pluralism favour this view. According to this view, it is not only the case that the same text may be interpreted differently from different socio-cultural backgrounds but also that varied interpretations are possible from persons living in the same milieu. This view makes room for freedom, creativity and subjectivity in the act of interpretation.

Now we may consider the question whether these two usages of interpretation can be reconciled and if so how. Even if we give importance to etymology and morphology, still we can admit the possibility of multiple interpretations. This is specially evident in the case of interpreting texts written in the Sanskrit language for, in Sanskrit etymology the words coming from verbal roots often have many different meanings. Śri Aurobindo in his *The Secret of the Vedas* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* has cited many examples to show such multiple usages of the Vedic words and expressions. As for example, the Vedic word *Agni* not only refers to the physical principle of fire but also means that which purifies or the purified will or force. The word *Sūrya* refers not only to solar light but also to the god of the revelatory knowledge. Similar multilayered meanings can be noticed in the word *dharma,* which connotes not only that which holds or sustains but also essence, nature, and of course, religion, as it is being ordinarily translated. Similar diverse meanings lie inherent in many words in Sanskrit and some other languages. While selecting the appropriate meaning, the interpreter or the translator should take into account the context in which the word is appearing so that the word-meaning may be relevant and proper. This shows that even if we admit the importance of etymology, still the principle 'one word one meaning' is not applicable in the case of Sanskrit language at least. Consequently, we notice that the Vedas have received different interpretations from different perspectives; some are *ādhyātmika* or spiritual, others are pertaining to gods or *ādhidaivika* and some are *ādhibhautika* or ritualistic and social in nature. It is worth recalling that even the eminent Indian thinkers like Śankaracārya and Abhinavagupta offered multiple interpretations of the same *sūtra.*

Without going into the details of such examples of multiple interpretations of the same passage or text in Indian tradition, I would now like to point out the resonance of similar spirit in the Western tradition. In the contemporary Western world we notice that Gadamer and many other hermeneuticians admit the possibility of multiple interpretations. One and the same text may be interpreted by different thinkers from different perspectives and from different socio-historical milieu. We may mention, for example, the various interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* by thinkers like Tilak, Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and also by Girindra Sekhar Bose, a direct student of Freud, the psychoanalyst. All these diverse interpretations of the same text reveal the different *Weltanschauungen* of the writers, in addition to conveying the message of the *Bhagavad Gītā.* Moreover, we expect to have many more translations and interpretative commentaries of this text in the days yet to come. Hence, there may not be an interpretation which can be considered as final and exhaustive; there is always room for further interpretations. So, there is no end of interpretation even when it seems all of the interpretations have been given.The hermeneuticians thus seek to explore the infinite possibilities and keep the options open. Such 'openness' of interpretation, should not be taken to suggest that the interpreter can take the liberty of altering or transforming the *interpretandum* arbitrarily and freely, for that would violate the principles of interpretation and denigrate the quality of interpretation.

Such Gadamarian view of accepting the multiplicity of interpretation is often criticized by others. It is objected that Gadamer opens the door to arbitrariness and the act of interpretation is not being considered as a serious, responsible business. If we accept multiple interpretations, then we shall have to accept everything available, as till now there is no criterion by which we can judge the rightness or wrongness of any interpretation.

In order to meet this challenge, offered by the singularist, conservative thinkers, it is necessary to reconsider the claims made by Gadamer and other liberal pluralists. Following Heidegger, Gadamer, wants to supplement the then prevailing methodological hermeneutics by a philosophical hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, according to him, is not merely a method – it is a part of our very human existence. Interpretation is not something which we, like any other method, may employ or may not employ. It is something that happens 'beyond our willing and doing'. Moreover, the methodological alienation of the interpreter from his own historicity has been the subject of severe criticisms in Gadamer's writings. He emphatically states that our historicity, even if it may involve presuppositions, choices or biases, can never be thoroughly separated from any interpretation. Such prejudices do not obscure our view of the past but rather open it up for us. ''But such openness presupposes neither 'neutrality' about the objects of study nor indeed self-obliteration, but rather includes the identifiable appropriation of one's own pre-opinions and prejudices. One has to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text presents itself in its otherness and in this manner has the chance to play off its truth in the matter at hand against the interpreter's pre-opinion''.[3]

Even though Gadamer holds that the 'opinions are indeed a changeable variety of possibilities', he has to admit that amidst various meanings and interpretations there should be a standard. Even though he does not support the so called 'objectivity' and validity of interpretation, yet he certainly does not support arbitrariness or looseness in interpretation. Hence, he clearly states that ''all correct interpretation has to screen itself against arbitrary whims and narrowness of imperceptible habits of thinking''.[4]

In the light of similar statements, strewn at different places of his voluminous writings, it is necessary to understand Gadamer's basic intention and to reinterpret his ideas so that we can accommodate some norms and principles for making interpretation a truly 'responsible business'. Drawing insights from Gadamer, we may mention some of the indispensable conditions, which are necessary to make the interpretation acceptable and authentic :

- *(a)* **Coherence :** Any interpretation must be coherent and present a unified picture of all the details. "The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve the harmony means that understanding has failed".[5]
- *(b)* **Comprehensiveness :** The interpreter has to take into account the author's intention as a whole. A good interpretation should be thorough and should discuss all the relevant questions.
- *(c)* **Appropriateness :** A good interpretation has to locate and specify the basic issue to be explored. "The real power of hermeneutical consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable".[6]
- *(d)* **Contextuality :** Proper interpretative act should take into account the historical and cultural background, both of the author and of the interpreter.
- *(e)* **Potentiality :** A good interpretation should be suggestive, creative and at the same time efficacious.

If we do not admit the importance and efficacy of such principles or norms, we cannot answer the criticisms of the singularists, who object to the idea of multiple interpretations, that if we accept any and every interpretation then we do not have adequate criterion to assess the quality of interpretation. Hence, even if we support the view that interpretativeness is rooted in our very human existence, we cannot rule out the necessity of having some principles or developing the *art* of interpretation while performing any act of interpretation.

Realising the importance of such principles of interpretation, Indian thinkers from very early times, formulated such principles for proper and systematic understanding of the texts. Yāska's *Nirukta* may be regarded as the earliest available work containing the meanings of the Vedic words. The primary objective of the *Nirukta* is to provide etymology, explanation and interpretation of words. It is also required to have thorough acquaintance with the grammatical rules as well as the contexts in which they are applied. Hence, *Nirukta* is an important guide for interpretating the Vedas by formulating philosophical and morphological principles.

Besides *Nirukta,* Jaimini's *Mīmāṁsā-Sūtrā* may be regarded as the most comprehensive and prevailing authority on the subject of interpretation. The Mīmāṁsakas formulated some principles or *nyāya*-s which are primarily linguistic and grammatical, yet they contribute to the proper understanding of the meaning of the exegetical texts. In addition to such *Mīmāṁsā nyāya*-s, we must also consider the efficacy of some other principles, known as *tantrayukti*-s, which can be noticed in different *Dharmaśāstra*-s, Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and Caraka and Susruta's *Saṁhitā*-s. Such *tantrayukti*-s throw light on the usages of words and sentences. Proper meanings of the words and sentences help us to comprehend the text as a whole, and also to make proper commentary or *bhāṣya* possible.

Without going into the details of such principles or guidelines, which have been formulated in ancient India, we would like only to point out that many perceptive thinkers of both India and the West admit the necessity of some norms or criteria, without which an interpretation cannot be acceptable or authentic. Even if there may not be any definite and fixed criterion for determining the acceptability of one interpretation over others, yet such principles or norms are helpful in determining the merit of the interpretation.

Moreover, such principles will enable us to transform the hermeneutics of suspicion into the hermeneutics of respect. 'The hermeneutics of suspicion' (I use the term paraphrasing Paul Ricoeur's expression 'phenomenology of suspicion') would not accept any interpretation to be acceptable and authentic, on the pretext of involving choice and prejudices amidst the available multiplicity of interpretations; but if interpretation is well supported by adequate principles and is not repugnant to the original meaning of the *interpretandum* (i.e., the text to be interpreted), then it can lead to the 'hermeneutics of respect', where adequate care is taken not to distort the original message contained in the text.

Hence, even though we support ontological hermeneutics and multiplicity of interpretations, we also cannot deny the importance of methodological factors. Realising the need of such methodological principles, Indian thinkers since antiquity, devoted much attention to the formulation of such principles or norms for the purpose of giving proper *bhāṣya* and *ṭīkā* of any significant text. Hence, it can be maintained that the art or technique of interpretation was developed in India much earlier than in Western countries. It is our task to explore the significations of those principles, and to implement them in our acts of interpretation. Thus, it is not merely necessary to admit the inevitability of interpretation, but also to be responsible in its implementation. If we sincerely want to improve both the *act* and the *art* of interpretation we have to take into account the contributions of both the East and the West. Such dialogue between the East and the West will not only result in the fusion of horizons but also in the fusion of art and act, theory and practice, tradition and modernity at the same time.

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2

Hermeneutics and Phenomenology

Kalyan Bagchi

Preamble

Ever since Kant advocated his two-fold thesis, viz., *(i)* that our world, i.e., the world we know or the world in which we act is an interpreted world, and *(ii)* that such interpretation gains in depth and dimension in a transcendental, i.e., reflective or subjective deduction of the interpretative 'categories', the phenomenological core of interpretation was brought to light. For, the long and the short of Kant's inference — if we can call it inference – in the 'deduction' was that interpretative categories are but steps in the self-authenticating of consciousness. Thereby, the relationship between hermeneutics and phenomenology was established. Whatever 'deduction' Kant makes of interpretative categories is but a 'make-believe' (Professor K.C. Bhattacharyya)[1] of 'inference' for the interpreter, a kind of *Svārthānumāna.* I need to highlight two points here that are demanding. First, the Indian concept of '*Svārthānumāna*' has to be situated in the context of discussion on interpretation *vis-à-vis* consciousness. Secondly, for posterity, Kant bequeathed a methodology of interpreting interpretation.

Hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation has been variously 'understood'. It should at once be made clear that when a particular hermeneutic interpretation is 'understood', it becomes a kind of reflective understanding whether such reflexivity consists in the hermenuet's stationing himself in a situation – historical, philosophical, sociological or whatever, or in his authenticating himself with regard to a certain culture or tradition or history of philosophy – importantly – or even history.

Hermeneutical interpretation, in short, consists in consciousness' viewing the interpretative categories as steps in the unfolding of the tale of consciousness with reference to a situation in which the interpreter finds himself, and with which he has to reckon.

In my paper, I have *first* made a broad survey of the different conceptions of hermeneutics advocated so far; *secondly*, I raise the question: In what way does hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation of an author's (i.e., a text's) intention differ from a theory formulated in a different atmosphere altogether? I have in mind Grice's theory which seeks to elucidate the concept of 'meaning' of language in terms of speakers of the language; *thirdly*, as *against* Grice and, positively from the point of hermeneutic phenomenology, I try to show how a hermeneutic theory resolves itself into the phenomenology of the hermeneut, i.e., the interpreter.

A word more before I begin the text of my paper. As philosophers we read history of philosophy. But history of philosophy is no chronology. It is understanding or reviewing of the *mentalite* of the philosopher in his *milieu*. We, therefore, fix or set the philosopher in the perspective of what we may call *inner* time. And, what is equally important, we, who pursue the thought of the philosopher, *situate* ourselves, and thereby interpret the philosopher accordingly. So our study of history of philosophy boils down to hermeneutic phenomenology.

I

Hermeneutics, historically speaking, has concerned itself originally with text interpretation. But in the variegated phases of its development it has become a complex mosaic of the *theory of interpretation, reflexivity of the interpreter*, his *authentic existence*, his *being-in-the-world*, etc., *pari pasu* with interpretation gaining depth and dimension, the interpreter attains a heightened self-consciousness which hermeneutics has taken stock of as in Paul Ricouer's 'hermeneutic philosophy', for example. And since the interpreter in no isolated individual, but is *part of a tradition*, since he *is*, so far as he is *in situ*, hermeneutics has also — as in Gadamer[2] – understood interpretation and the interpreter as *recreating tradition*, as tradition making *accretions into the re-living of it*, and as thus, *making fusion of different horizons* – horizons of the past and the present – of interpretations (*a la* Gadamer). Sometimes again, text interpretation has been sought to be achieved through a particular method, viz., the historical method, though the interpretation of this method has itself been a matter of dispute. Ranke, for example, was an inveterate objectivist, a naïve one: history must record faithfully all that took place in the past. But faithful recording itself has been differently conceived by Betti, for example, who employs or claims to employ the *historical* *methodology* taking such methodology to consist in the 'process of invesion' by which the interpreter can, instead of projecting himself into the author of the text, *imaginatively reproduces* the *creative process of the author*. This approach too has been criticized. It has been pointed out that historicism takes the author, a subject, to be an object unto the interpreter. Together, it is maintained, they form part of a hermeneutic circle, a tradition. So together they are participants in a 'dialogical understanding' through which something new, not envisaged by the author, *emerges*. And this conception of interpretation counters the 'object'-oriented, or 'truth'-oriented hermeneutics inspired by the historist school. From this point of view Truth as an ideal is no part of the process of hermeneutics.

II

Now, so general a statement about hermeneutics is apt to be regarded as an all-too-bald one. And so bald a statement, it may be remarked, says everything, and therefore, says nothing. But the above does bring out that hermeneutics has today become a new discipline of interpretation of which the role of the interpreter, his tradition and history, and most importantly, the question of different interpretations – often conflicting interpretations as in Paul Ricouer – and the related questions of *(i)* the importance of different interpretations in the matter of achieving self-consciousness of the interpreter and *(ii) Truth,* form part.

Two points would be in order here. First, as theory of interpretation how is hermeneutics to be *distinguished from semantics*? If it is said that the hermeneut is concerned not with word-meaning and sentence-meaning but with what the author of a text is concerned, 'divine' his meaning, so to speak, the ready rejoinder would be, 'Does not Grice,[3] for example, highlight user's meaning in addition to sentence-meaning?' Or, ''Does not Grice say that nobody has been able to elucidate what a word or sentence means in a particular language 'L' without elucidating what an utterer means by it?'' In Grice's theory ''what an 'e' (= expression) or a 'w' (= word) means is derived from the primary or basic locution, ''what 'u' (= utterer) means by 'e' or 'w' in 'L'.'' If it is said that hermeneutics 'divines' the intention of the text writer, then a Gricean would counter: ''What else the utterer does if by uttering ('w' or 'e'), i.e., by executing an utterance, he/she does not 'intend' something?'' In Grice's theory, S non-naturally means something by an utterance 'w', if S intends (intention$_1$) to produce by uttering 'w' some response in his/her audience A and intends (intention$_2$) that A should recognize S's intention, and also intends (intention$_3$) that this recognition on the part of A shall be the reason for A's response to S.

I state the entire Gricean schema in order to bring out the rejoinder that may be made by the Gricean to a possible reply from the hermenuet's side that in hermeneutical interpretation the interpreter – 'hearer' in Gricean scheme – has as much a role to play as the author. The Gricean 'hearer', it may be said, is the hermeneutical 'interpreter'.

Sufficient latitude having thus been given to the Gricean scheme, it yet falls short of the hermenuet's requirements. The hermenuet does not merely recognize the author's intention from a distance, but reconstructs it, makes an *accretion* of his own understanding, point of view, culture, tradition – call it as one wills to – to the author's meaning, and *enlarges* the meaning of the text. Does not poet Bishnu Dey, e.g., add to the corpus of the Shakespearean sonnet 'Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?' etc., when he translated it as '*tomara upamā devo ki vasanta vipine*?' So the 'hearer' in a theory of meaning is no 'interpreter' in a theory of interpretation. Or, our interpreter in the theory of interpretation is no hearer. To interpret is to *do* something to *what* is being interpreted. For *the interpreter, the text is an atmosphere* within which he moves.

III

The second point is closely related to the observations made in respect of the first point, particularly the observation about the *interpreter's active role* in interpretation. Exegetical interpretation, with Professor Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, sheds off into philosophical construction.[4] And this need not imply an intellectual dishonesty. For example, that the Vedānta *Śrutivākya*-s propound the doctrine of Brahman being the ultimate ground of the world is the view of Śaṅkara. And here text interpretation goes together with philosophic construction. *Sarveṣu Vedānteṣu ekavākya-pratipādakatvena samānugatāni sadeva soumya idam agra asīt ekamevādvitīyaṁ.*

Rāmānuja, again, would give a different interpretation of the *Śruti*-s. But this difference is not a matter to be despaired of; it is the example of *puruṣamativaicitra* – different interpretations find place because they constitute one horizon of interpretation. They fall within the same horizon; they have family resemblance, so that one enriches the other.

One intervening consideration is, however, important. Hermeneutics, historically speaking, was text interpretation, but today it has developed into a theory of interpretation. Does not text interpretation, then, have anything to do with hermeneutics as it has taken shape today? All depends upon what we mean by 'text'. The Bible is a text and hermeneutics of it will exercise itself on the question 'What is *the* Bible'?, i.e., 'What is *the* Book'? Similarly, Roman law is a text: a juridical interpretation will be concerned with the social formation which may help one reconstruct the genesis of the Roman law. A dream itself may be a text, and understanding it is unearthing the subconscious wishes, cravings, drives, etc., of the dreamer, his position and so on. Now, today, when hermeneutics has become a general name for theory of interpretation, it includes all these ways of interpretation. Also, understanding a text is placing it in a *context.* And as the context is permeated by the *life-world* of the writer and the interpreter, we can devise a general theory of interpretation.

IV

Hermeneutics today has brought out the importance of history of philosophy anew. After all, history of philosophy is no chronicle. No history is mere chronicle. "See here this shiny pebble? Does it not tell you something? It tells you many things if you have eyes to see and ears to hear", writes Pandit Nehru to his daughter, Indira. And history of philosophy is no temporal succession as chronicle is, nor logical development of ideas — *a la* Hegel — to the teleological end of reaching their acme in a far-reaching Absolute. It is the study of a thinker or a thought-system, which might have occurred in the past from which we seek enlightenment. We do not merely *situate* the thought in the context we occupy, we also understand our thought and the past thought side by side; we not only understand the present in terms of the past, we also understand the past in terms of the present. When Heidegger pinpoints formal apophantic logic of proposition, seeking to represent things as they are, as lying at the back of our varifiability-claims, and when he takes us back to Aristotle's notion of *aletheia* (disclosure), do we not understand our epistemology, science etc., anew? Long ago, Erdmann observed, "The history of philosophy can be represented rightly ... only with the help of philosophy ... The objection that a philosophic representation of history of philosophy must not be called history but rather philosophy of the history of philosophy is distinguished neither by its novelty nor by its insight; it forgets that even an unphilosophic representation is not the history itself but a representation of history''.[5]

What sort of theory is hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation? Whether we have in mind Betti's hermeneutical theory or the Heidegger-Gadamer hermeneutical *philosophy*, i.e., whether we are concerned like Betti with the 'canons of interpretation' or, like Heidegger-Gadamer with hermeneutic as a philosophy of language and this latter as a foundation of a theory of 'Being' (man's being is *ant-worten*, i.e., response through words), we have to do some reflective exercise, i.e., we have to understand 'interpretation', understand 'What is interpretation?' Is it like understanding of a theory? Is it like meta-theory? Hermeneutics is a theory of interpretation no doubt but it consists in such interpretation that the interpreter, throughout his interpretative activity, *becomes* self-conscious, *achieves* it. He gains in depth and dimension and something *new* emerges from his understanding. In meta-theory, too, something new emerges. Does not, e.g., the philosopher of science become conscious of the methodology, presuppositions, etc., of his scientific activity to which he does not otherwise, i.e., *qua* scientist, attend? To this, the reply would be that the interpreter in hermeneutics does not interpret from a distance. His activity is characteristically different from an intellectual understanding in the context of which *what* is understood retains its *neutrality* to the understanding. Here, however, in hermeneutics what is understood brings about an experiential shift, as it were, in the interpreter. It is not merely retrospectively looking at what was attended to. What *was* attended to was *understood anew*, i.e., incorporated in the new understanding. An analogue of this procedure would be the way the Kantian transcendental presuppositions of our knowledge of the world are understood. This relationship cannot be understood in the form of a Modus Tollens – unless 'P', then not 'Q' (where 'P' = the transcendental presuppositions and 'Q' = knowledge of the world). For 'P' carves out, 'constitutes' 'Q'. Insofar as hermeneutic interpretation brings about, in Kantian diction, an experiential shift in the hermenuet, we can say that hermeneutics aligns itself with phenomenology.

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3

Hermeneutic Experience and the Law of Karma

Binod Kumar Agarwala

> However paradoxical it may seem, the concept of experience seems to me to be one of the most obscure we have.
>
> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*[1]

Section 0: Introduction

Modernity is constituted by a transformation in the nature of experience. Modernity has led to the destruction of experience in a robust sense, *Erfahrung*, and to the establishment of experience in two senses: a thinner form of immediacy, *Erlebnis* of social sciences and a positivist experience of natural sciences. Once the transformation has been undergone it becomes necessarily invisible, because, it is believed naively that we are never without experience. Hence, we live in the immediacy of *Erlebnis* and subjectivity of positivist experience, oblivious to the destruction that has occurred. The emphatic experience of modernity is the destruction of experience that is fast moving beyond experience, and as a consequence the nature of modernity is passing into oblivion. It is against the looming invisibility of this loss, that we undertake this project to provide us with an understanding of experience (*Erfahrung*), so that we can have experience (*Erfahrung*) of the (looming) absence of experience. The latter is possible because, the history of modernity survives the destruction of experience, and it makes possible the rehabilitation of experience in the robust sense. No doubt thin experience in its givenness, immediacy, subjectivity and closure supplants any notion of experience as historically formative, but hermeneutics' interruption of thin experience and its forming it, returns to experience its formative power, its historicity and its communal dimension.

Kant noticed that modernity operates primarily with two notions of experience. One notion of experience forms the basis of natural sciences. It was analyzed by British empiricists before Kant, and was taken up once again by logical positivists in twentieth century. The other notion of experience is analyzed by German social and historical sciences. Kant writes: "To apprehend a regular and appropriate building with one's cognitive faculties, be the mode of representation clear or confused, is quite a different thing from being conscious of this representation with an accompanying sensation of delight. Here, the representation is referred wholly to the subject, and what is more to its feeling of life—under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure—and this forms the basis of a quite separate faculty of discriminating and estimating, that contributes nothing to knowledge. All it does is to compare the given representation in the subject with the entire faculty of representations of which the mind is conscious in the feeling of its state".[2] The first one is the cognitive experence of natural sciences, whose a priori conditions were laid down by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The second kind of experience is *Lebensgefühl* (feeling of life) which was analyzed by Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*. This experience takes on the form of *Erlebnis* in post-Kantian German thought.

Section 1: The Positivist Notion of Epistemic Experience

Positivist notice of epistemic experience denudes experience both of its social dimension and its radical temporality and historically. According to the epistemic metaphysics of *Critique of Pure Reason*, the distinction between subject and object is central to cognitive experience. Only that experience has cognitive function where the distinction between subject and object is available, so that one can say that the subject is having experience of the object. If in the context of an experience the distinction between subject and object is not available, then that experience has no cognitive role and is treated as mere feeling. Hence, this distinction can be said to define, distinguish, and identify the cognitive experience from other experiences according to modernity.

Kant realized that to maintain the distinction between subject and object yet standing in epistemic relation, there is a necessity of accepting the fact of object affecting the subject, i.e., the fact of receptivity in the subject. But, according to Kant, mere reception of manifold of intuition by sensibility is not enough for a cognitive consciousness. These intuitions must be so formed and understood that it is an experience of object. The condition of this is that all experience be ascribed to a unitary self-conscious subject. The condition of this, in turn, is that the intuition be formed according to the forms of sensibility, i.e., space and time, and so formed, intuition be understood according to the categories, the most important of which for us being substance and causality, so that for Kant the object of epistemic experience is a substance in space and time governed by laws of causality. The subject is conceived as the transcendental unity of apperception, which is not only self-conscious unity of manifold of experience but also unity in time.

When any member of the society takes the stance of the subject, i.e., conceives himself as subject to get knowledge of society, i.e., conceives society as the object of knowledge, then he must reflect himself out of society, out of all social relations, since the transcendental condition of the epistemic relation as determined by modernity requires that the duality of subject and object be maintained. To maintain the duality of subject and object, i.e., himself and society, the subject must conceive himself as a being outside the society. That is to say, when any member of society conceives himself as the subject of the experiential relation of which the object is society, he must reflect himself out of all social relations, i.e., he must conceive himself as an individual who can exist independently of society. This is the transcendental requirement of the subject-object dichotomy applied to experience of society. That is to say, if one looks at the society from the perspective of the subject and wants to have an objective knowledge of society then he must conceive of himself as an individual. Any member who by taking the stance of subject reflects himself out of all social relations, also when he conceives each member of society as a subject, he reflects them each out of all social relations, and hence, conceives them all as individuals. So the logic of subject-object dichotomy leads inevitably to the collapse of society; the society is reflected out of existence, since each member is conceived as an individual. This is the reason why modernity cannot admit the ontological autonomy of society, and admits only the primacy of existence of individuals, and thereby begets metaphysical individualism in philosophy. Together with society, by similar arguments, both tradition and history also get dissolved as no one belongs to tradition and history. Hence, experience loses its entire social and historical dimension.

In the natural sciences experience plays an important role in the logic of induction. Hence, according to Gadamer, it has been subjected to an epistemological schematization, and this has diminished its original meaning. The main lacuna, in Gadamer's view, in the theory of experience so far is that it has been entirely oriented towards science, and "hence takes no account of the inner historicality of experience".[3] He writes, "It is aim of science to so objectify experience that it no longer contains any historical element. The scientific experience does this by its methodological procedure".[4] The methodological procedures through the objectivity of their approach, ensure that these basic experiences can be repeated by anyone. This is required because in the natural sciences experiments must be verifiable, and in human sciences the whole process of investigation must be capable of being checked by others. Hence, no place can be left for the historicality of experience in science. But Gadamer does not blame sciences for this effect. "Modern science thus simply carries through in its methodology what experience has always striven after. Experience is valid if it is confirmed; hence its dignity depends on its fundamental repeatability. But this means that experience, by its very nature, abolishes its history. This is true even of everyday experience, and how much more for any scientific version of it. Thus it is not just a chance one-sided emphasis of modern scientific theory, but has a foundation in fact, that the theory of experience is related teleologically to the truth that is derived from it".[5] The fact on which the scientific idealization of experience is founded is not the fact of subjectivity, for according to Gadamer, "the pure transcendental subjectivity of the ego is not given as such, but always in the idealization of language, which is already present in any acquisition of experience and in which the individual I's membership of a particular linguistic community is worked out".[6] To overcome scientific idealization of experience in order to get at the robust sense of experience, we need to overcome the constitution of the pure transcendental subjectivity of the ego in the idealization of language.

The transcendental subjectivity of ego is achieved through a comprehensive examination of the prejudices that hold the human mind captive and lead it away from the true knowledge of things, thus carrying out a methodical self-purification of the mind that is more a discipline than a method. Bacon's famous doctrine of the 'prejudices' in his *Novum Organum* first and foremost made a methodological use of reson possible. Descartes further developed criticism of 'prejudices' which ultimately in Kant and enlightenment gave rise to the prejudice against prejudice.

Bacon speaks of and criticizes specifically two prejudices of mind. First, human mind has the tendency always to remember what is positive, and forget all negative instances. And second, human mind has the tendency to confuse knowledge with empty conventions of language. According to Gadamer, the criticism of these two tendencies of mind by Bacon is based on not understanding the structure of experience. "Hope is such a clear mark of human experience, ever since the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus that, in view of its human importance, we must regard as one-sided the principle of accepting teleology as the sole criterion of the achievement of knowledge".[7] Hope depends on remembering the positive instances and forgetting the negative instances. So this tendency of the mind on which hope survives cannot be criticized in all respects. In his view, "We shall probably feel the same in regard to the importance of language, which precedes experience, and although illusory verbalistic problems can derive from the dominance of linguistic conventions, it is equally certain that language is at the same time a positive condition of, and guide to, experience itself".[8]

No doubt the teleological aspect of method of induction has grasped a true element in the structure of experience. "The fact that experience is valid, so long as it is not contradicted by new experience (ubi non reperitur instantia contradictoria), is clearly characteristic of the general nature of experience, no matter whether we are dealing with its scientific form, in the modern experiment, or with the experience of daily life that men have always had".[9] But according to Gadamer, "We cannot limit ourselves to the teleological aspect, from which until now the problem has largely been considered".[10] So the question arises what are the other aspects of experience from which perspectives it can be studied? *Erlebnis* highlights another aspect of experience.

Section 2: The Notion of *Erlebnis* (lived experience)

In order to overcome subjectivity of transcendental ego Kant himself in his *Critique of Judgment* takes help of *Lebensgefühl* (feeling of life). The Kantian notion of *Lebensgefühl* (feeling of life) in post-Kantian German thought transforms into *Erlebnis* (lived experience) as distinguished from *Erfahrung* (communal historical experience). In German, there are two words for experience – *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. *Erlebnis* is used to discuss the idea of immediate experience of isolated individuals. *Erfahrung*, in contrast, is used to indicate the collective historical ongoing and cumulative experience of a community. *Erlebnis* is something you have; *Erfahrung* is something you undergo.

Gadamer also discusses the idea of *Erlebnis* as part of his great project to distance himself from modern subjectivism, which emerged partly out of the romantic preoccupation with the soul thrust back upon itself. In its stead he wishes to propose a communal ontology in which understanding is always achieved through dialogue. In pursuit of this goal Gadamer attacks the subjectivism of *Erlebnis,* and promotes a social-historical concept of experience, *Erfahrung*. Both German terms translate as 'experience' in English, but in contradistinction to experiences of the individual subject (*Erlebnis*), *Erfahrung* connotes the manifestation of the traditionary experience of a community. This communal experience is founded not in the inner recesses of the individual mind but in the institutions of tradition and the life of the polis, an eminently civic experience.

Gadamer argues for the dialectical displacement of *Erlebnis* (a personal life experience) by *Erfahrung* (the experience of social interaction), as the basis for hermeneutic understanding, substituting for romantic subjectivism a historical-communal ontology. In his exposition of the term there is no explicit opposition to the idea of *Erlebnis*. Similarly, there is no clear progression from *Erlebnis* to *Erfahrung*. He describes a subsumption of an ideal which continues to survive in another form, without saying exactly what it is in the earlier incarnation that remains. Gadamer's method is dialectical, especially in the way that *Erlebnis* never fully succumbs to his polemical intention, but is never entirely disavowed. When *Erlebnis* seems to have been dealt the decisive blow, its remnants rise again with some unexpected bit of life, and finally, only modulate into another history. Its positive and negative consequences integrate themselves into Gadamer's larger project, because *Erlebnis* was used by the nineteenth century German philosophers precisely to oppose modern technocracy, a goal that is at the heart of Gadamer's purposes.

In his concern to oppose the supremacy of methodology as the standard of truth of experience Gadamer does not wish to rehearse the sterile appeal to feeling, as was done by Kant, as that was exhausted with the romantic experiment. The patent awareness of the bankruptcy of this kind of subjectivism as a standard calls out for an alternative to scientific methodologism. So his hermeneutics will be formed out of a disagreement with *Erlebnis*. But it is like a quarrel with a loved one. It is after all in opposition to the cold rationalist tendency of Enlightenment that a doctrine of life-experience was engendered, a development for which Gadamer has sympathy. But he achieves transcendence of the opposition of reason and feeling in a dialectical encounter with truth of experience. This dialectic is the historical manifestation of an ongoing question, the question of truth's criterion. The approach to the question, Gadamer now wishes to promote, is precisely that the *communal* and *historical* movement of thought in wrestling with the question of being is itself an ongoing approach to the answer.

Section 3: Gadamer on the History of the Word *Erlebnis*

The word *Erlebnis* is derived from the word *erleben.* The word *Erlebnis* comes in common use only in the late nineteenth century, especially in 1870s. But the word *erleben* is older, which appeared often in the age of Goethe. According to Gadamer, ''Erleben means primarily 'to be still alive when something happens'. From this the word has a note of the immediacy with which something real is grasped – unlike something of which one presumes to know, but the confirmation of which through one's own experience is lacking, whether it is taken over from others or comes from hearsay, or whether it is worked out, surmised or imagined. What is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself''.[11] It is interesting to note that the Sanskrit word for experience is *anubhava,* which also literally means 'to be alive when something happens'. When the word *erleben* began to be used for immediate experience in contrast to mediated knowledge, the form *das Erlebte* was used to mean the permanent content of what is experienced. ''This content is like yield or a residue that acquires permanence, weight and significance from out of the transience of experiencing''.[12] These two meanings, i.e., the immediacy of experience and the lasting yield of experience, were combined in the form *Erlebnis* when it came in common use. The immediacy of experience refers to the fact of experience preceding all interpretation, treatment, or communication and which merely offers a starting point for interpretation and material for working. The second factor in the meaning of *Erlebnis* is the discovered yield of experience, i.e., its lasting residue. Hence, according to Gadamer, in the sense of *Erlebnis* ''something became an 'experience' inasmuch as it is not only experienced, but inasmuch as its being experienced has a particular emphasis that gives it lasting importance''.[13]

Dilthey gave this conceptual function to the word in his *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (*Experience and Poetry*) in 1905, and popularized it. But the word had taken root earlier in the nineteenth-century biographies of artists and poets. The coined word *Erlebnis,* meaning what is directly given, the ultimate material for all imaginative forming, expresses the criticism of the rationalism of the enlightenment which emphasized the concept of life (*Leben*). This criticism introduced the criterion of *Erlebtsein* (being experienced), and hence made possible the formation of the word *Erlebnis* according to Gadamer. As against the abstraction of the understanding and the particularity of perception or representation emphasized by positivism of enlightenment, the concept of life implies the connection with totality and infinity, since the concept of life forms the metaphysical background for the speculative holistic thought of German idealism, and plays a fundamental role in Fichte, Hegel and even Schleiermacher. The words *Erlebnis* and *Erleben*, due to their association with life, also played an important role in the protest against modern bourgeoisie industrial technological society at the beginning of our century. But, the life philosophy of our own day, rejecting the mechanization of life in contemporary society, puts such an obvious emphasis on the word *Erlebnis* that its conceptual implications remain totally hidden to us. Dilthey's coining of the concept brought out the pantheistic background, since, "Every act, as an element of life, remains connected with the infinity of life that manifests itself in it. Everything finite is an expression, a representation of the infinite".[14]

Section 4: Gadamer on the Concept of *Erlebnis*

According to Gadamer, "Dilthey's concept of erlebnis clearly contains two elements, the pantheistic and the positivist, the experience (Erlebnis) and still more its result (Ergebnis)".[15] Dilthey, adopting an intermediate position between speculation and empiricism, tried to give an epistemological justification to the work of the human sciences and hence, gave the concept of *erlebnis* an epistemological function. In the words of Gadamer: "Just as the remoteness from experience and the hunger for experience, which come from the distress caused by the complicated workings of civilization transformed by the industrial revolution, brought the word Erlebnis into general usage, so the new distance attitude that historical consciousness takes to tradition, gives to the concept of Erlebnis its epistemological function".[16]

In the nineteenth century the social sciences modeled themselves on natural sciences and hence, in social sciences epistemological consideration became important too as it happened before for natural sciences. It was the sense of alienation from the world, both natural and social, which made epistemological considerations paramount in sciences. "If the alienation which the age of mechanics felt from nature as the natural was expressed epistemologically in the concept of self-consciousness and in the rule of certainty, developed into a method of 'clear and distinct perception', the human sciences of the nineteenth century felt a similar alienation from the world of history''.[17] Man no longer felt automatically at home in the intellectual creations of the past, art and history as they ceased to be familiar. They became objects of research and data from which a past can be made present. Thus, the concept of the given, also, entered Dilthey's construction of the concept of experience (*Erlebnis*). The given data in experience in case of natural sciences were sensations and impressions as was the case in Kant, but in case of human sciences the given data in experience (*Erlebnis*) are not 'sensations' but units of meaning. Gadamer writes: ''The primary data, to which the interpretation of historical objects goes back, are not data of experiment and measurement, but units of meaning. That is what the concept experience states: the structures of meaning which we meet in the human sciences, however strange and incomprehensible they may seem to us, can be reduced to ultimate units of what is given in consciousness, unities which themselves no longer contain anything, alien, objective, in need of interpretation. These are units of experience that are themselves units of significance''.[18] Thus, in the epistemology of the human sciences we see that idea of life restricts the mechanistic model by making the data of experience themselves as units of meaning rather than atoms of 'sensation'. The units of meaning are teleological in Dilthey, as life objectifies itself in structures of meaning, all understanding of meaning is 'a translating back of the objectification of life into the spiritual livingness from which they emerged'. The units of experience are teleological too for Husserl. He does not understand the unit of experience as a piece of the actual flow of experience of an 'I', but as our intentional relation. For him experiences exist only insofar as something is experienced and meant in them and hence, essence of experience for him is intentionality. Thus, both in Dilthey and in Husserl, both in life-philosophy and in phenomenology, experience is epistemological in function, teleological in nature, conceptually indeterminate, manifestion of life and ultimate datum of knowledge.

Gadamer also agrees with this understanding of the idea of *Erlebnis*, according to which it has multiple aspects. Experience of something is integrated with whole life yet distinguished from other experiences in life. He writes: ''If something is called or considered an experience its meaning rounds it into the unity of a significant whole. An experience is as much distinguished from other experiences – in which other things are experienced – as from the rest of life in which 'nothing' is experienced. An experience is no longer just something that flows past quickly in the stream of life of consciousness – it is meant as unity and thus attains a new mode of being one''.[19] Experience needs to be integrated with whole life because an experience establishes itself in memory, and it has the lasting meaning for someone who has had it. But this integration is not a task completed in one go. One needs to come back to the same experience again and again to determine its meaning in life. Hence, no experience can be determined conceptually completely to exhaust what is experienced in its immediacy. ''Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself, and it is part of its meaning that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an inalienable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of this one life. Thus its being is not exhausted in what can be said of it and in what can be grasped as its meaning. The autobiographical or biographical reflection, in which its meaning is determined, remains fused with the whole movement of life and constantly accompanies it. It is practically the mode of being of experience to be so determinative that one is never finished with it. ... What we emphatically call an experience thus means something unforgettable and irreplaceable that is inexhaustible in terms of the understanding and determination of its meaning''.[20]

In Gadamer's writings conceptual indeterminacy and inexhaustibility of meaning form the basis of further elaboration of *Erlebnis.* Conceptual indeterminacy and inexhaustibility of meaning of experience, according to Gadamer, point to the fact that ''this concept is not wholly exhausted by its role of being the ultimate givenness and basis of all knowledge. There is something else quite different in the idea of 'experience' that needs to be recognized and reveals a set of problems that have still to be dealt with: its inner relation to life''.[21] The relationship between life and experience, which gives rise to conceptual indeterminacy and inexhaustibility of meaning of experience, needs to be understood properly. According to Gadamer, ''If one examines more precisely what is here called 'life' and what part of it is active in the concept of experience we see that the relationship of life to experience is not that of a universal to a particular. Rather, the unity of experience determined by its intentional content stands in an immediate relationship to the whole, to the totality of life''.[22] This relationship of experience and life is not only immediate but also reciprocal organic relationship of part and whole where life in this aspect is 'reaching out of life beyond itself'. Every experience is, in Schleiermacher's words, 'an element of eternal life'. Hence, what is represented in the experience of the moment goes far beyond the fact of its being determined by its object, contrary to what Kant thought.

Gadamer compares experience to adventure, where adventure is distinguished from episode, and draws out one of the most significant results regarding *Erlebnis*. Episodes are a succession of events which have no inner coherence, and for that very reason, have no permanent significance. In contrast to this, an adventure, however, interrupts the customary course of events, and yet is positively and significantly related to the context which it interrupts. Thus, in adventure life is felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength. And precisely because of this reason adventure is fascinating. Adventure removes the conditions and obligations of everyday life by venturing out into the uncertain. Even though adventure has an exceptional character it remains related to the return of everyday, into which the adventure cannot be taken. Thus, the adventure is 'passed through', like a test, from which one emerges enriched and more mature.[23] The conclusion Gadamer draws is put in one of the most wonderfully suggestive passages in *Truth and Method*: "There is an element of this, in fact, in every experience. Every experience is taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of one's life. It is not simply that it remains a living experience only until it is fully integrated into the context of one's life-consciousness. But the very way in which it is 'preserved' through its being worked into the whole of life-consciousness, goes far beyond any 'significance' it might be thought to have. Because it is itself within the whole of life, in it too whole of life is present".[24] Gadamer identifies the essential quality of *Erlebnis* as the sense of the whole in the part, where the part is taken out of the continuity of the whole, and yet related back to the whole in a manner in which the whole is presented by the part.

Gadamer finds an affinity between the structure of experience as such and the mode of being of the aesthetic. In his view the essence of experience (*Erlebnis*) is represented by aesthetic experience. "The aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience itself".[25] The reason for this is that the work of art as such presents a world for itself, which is removed from all connections with actuality. The work of art suddenly takes the person experiencing it out of the context of his life, by its own power, and relates him back to the whole of his life. Hence, "In the experience of art there is present a fullness of meaning which belongs not only to this particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life. An aesthetic experience always contains the experience of an infinite whole. Precisely because it does not combine with others to make one open experiential flow, but immediately represents the whole, its significance is infinite''.[26] Because of this reason in German thought the word *Erlebniskunst* (art of experience) is used for art. This means not only that art comes from experience but also that art is intended for aesthetic experience. All the three, i.e., the experience (*Erlebnis*), the work of art and the aesthetic experience share the same structure, which also is shared by the symbol.

The very sensuous nature of symbol has 'meaning'. It is something which is shown and enables one to recognize something else. According to classical Greek understanding, the meaning of the *symbolon* depends on its physical presence, and acquires its representative function only through the fact of its being shown or spoken. So symbol has the structure of representation of one thing by another.

The concept of symbol has a metaphysical background because of which it is possible to be led up from the sensible to the divine. ''For the world of the senses is not mere nothingness and darkness but the overflowing and reflection of truth''. The modern concept of symbol can be understood only through its metaphysical background, i.e., the metaphysical connection of visible and invisible. ''The symbolic refers to the inseparability of the visible appearance and invisible significance, i.e., symbol is the coincidence of the sensible and the non-sensible''.[27] Hence, symbol also can be interpreted inexhaustively as it is indefinite. No doubt Solger finds that all art is symbolic. The inexhaustibility of meaning of symbol points to the fact that the inner unity of image and significance which the symbol demands is tension filled. The symbol in its inner unity of sensuous and the non-sensuous does not simply remove the tension between the world of ideas and the world of the senses as there can be a disproportion between form and essence, expression and contents. ''The disproportion of form and essence is essential to the symbol inasmuch as the latter points by its meaning beyond its physical appearance. It is the origin of that indeterminate quality, that undecidedness between form and essence that is peculiar to the symbol''.[28] An *Erlebnis,* like a piece of art or a symbol, is something whose meaning cannot be exhausted by conceptual determination.

The surplus of meaning tied to the surplus of life that draws upon and feeds the experience makes the doctrine of *Erlebnis* a challenge to positivist conception of experience and scientific conception of truth; but it also at the same time points to the need of overcoming and transcending *Erlebnis* through another element of experience captured in the conception of *Erfahrung* (hermeneutic experience).

Section 5: Dialectical Negativity in the Concept of *Erfahrung*

The kind of experience to which *Erfahrung* refers is not something like the sedimented moments of the elements of experience in the consciousness of a subject, but rather it is a continuous process of integration and negation that every experience requires in its integration into whole life. *Erfahrung* is something the subject undergoes and suffers.

In the positivist inductive conception of experience the goal toward which the experience is oriented find its unity in the fact that the results of experience acquire a determinate status over the process. The process of induction begins when we notice that something repeats itself, and that we have the same experience twice. As these particular experiences accumulate, we abstract from them a general concept covering all such experiences. What induction leads to is a concept, and the advantage of a concept is that, once acquired, no further experience is necessary. One need no longer refer back to previous experiences or to the process by which the concept was generated; moreover, all future experiences of the type covered by the concept are obviated as well. Inducive experience is fulfilled in the knowledge of the concept – which, in both senses, is the end of experience. Thus, in the teleological view, experience finds its fulfillment in its extinction. The theory of induction implies that confirmation is the primary and most important aspect of experience. The process of experience is essentially an experience of repetition and the identity of experiences. An experience remains valid as long as it encounters no contrary instance, and when such a negative experience does arise, one simply embarks on a new and longer course of confirmation.

The understanding of experience fares no better in earlier theory of induction by Aristotle. Although in his view the unity of experience achieved in induction is no doubt unity of a universal, this universality is not a universality of a concept from which science and technology begin. "Rather, according to Aristotle, it occupies a remarkably indeterminate intermediate position between the many individual perceptions and the true universality of the concept".[29] The one unity of experience that proceeds from various individual perceptions through the retention of many individuals is the undifferentiated common unity of many single observations, which forms the basis to make predictions with any certainty. "However, the relation between experience, retention, and the resulting unity of experience remains conspicuously vague" in Aristotle. And when this is investigated we find a new element of experience not noticed by positivist scientific conception of induction. According to Gadamer, "the universality of experience of which Aristotle speaks is not that of the concept and of science ... Experience is always actually present only in the individual observation. It is not known in a previous universality. Here lies the fundamental openness of experience to new experience, not only in the general sense that errors are corrected, but that it is, in its essence, dependent on constant confirmation and necessarily becomes a different kind of experience where there is no confirmation (ubi reperitur instantia contradictoria)".[30] The openness of experience to new experience is a crucial element of *Erfahrung*.

Even though Gadamer notices the element of *Erfahrung* in Aristotle's procedure of induction, nonetheless he finds that it is geared towards sciences. This, according to Gadamer, comes out in the analogy Aristotle gives to explain his procedure of induction. He writes, "Aristotle has a very fine image for the logic of this procedure. He compares the many observations made by someone to a fleeting army. They hurry away, i.e., they do not stand fast. But if in this general flight an observation is confirmed through the repeated experience of it, then it does stand fast. At this point a first stop is put to the general flight. If others join it, then finally the whole fleeting host stops and again obeys the one commander. The domination of the whole army by one person is a symbol of science. The image is intended to show how science, i.e., universal truth, is possible, considering that it must not depend on the contingency of the observations, but be valid in a really universal way".[31] Gadamer then raises the question, "How is that possible, when observations rely so much on chance"?[32] To answer this question one has to realize that "Aristotle's symbol of the fleeting army is imperfect because it starts from the wrong assumption, namely that before the flight the army was standing fast. This is not true, of course, of what is being symbolized, which is the way in which knowledge is born".[33] But this very lack, according to Gadamer, shows clearly that "the birth of experience as an event over which no one has control and which is not even determined by the particular weight of this or that observation, but in which everything is co-determined in a way that is ultimately incomprehensible. The image captures the curious openness in which experience is acquired, suddenly, through this or that feature, unpredictably, and yet not without preparation, and valid from then on until there is a new experience, i.e., determining not only this or that example, but everything of the kind".[34] It is through this unprincipled universality of happening of experience, according to Aristotle, the true universality of the concept, i.e., the unity of the *arche* (which means both 'command' and 'principle'), and the possibility of science comes about. To capture the openness of experience through which experience comes about, we have to look at experience not for its contribution to the formation of concepts, but we have to·look to the process of experience and its genesis. "If we look at experience in this way in terms of its result, its real character as a process is overlooked. This process is, in fact, an essentially negative one".[35]

The negation involved in experience is determinate negation. To have an experience of an object means that the thing was not seen correctly hitherto and now it is known better. The negativity of experience is productive, in the sense that it does not destroy the old knowledge as a deception, rather makes a correction in it to give rise to comprehensive knowledge. "It cannot, therefore, be an object chosen at random in regard to which we have an experience, but it must be of such a nature that we gain through it better knowledge, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before, i.e., of a universal".[36] This kind of experience is called dialectical. The dialectical element of experience also brings to the fore the element of historicality involved in experience. Since experience changes knowledge we cannot have the same experience twice, strictly speaking. No doubt it is part of the nature of experience that it is continually confirmed, as it were, through being repeated. "But it is no longer a new experience when it is repeated and confirmed. When we have had an experience, this means that we possess it. We can now predict what was previously unexpected. The same thing cannot become again a new experience for us; only some other unexpected thing can provide someone who has experience with a new one. Thus the experiencing consciousness has reversed its direction, i.e., it has turned back on itself. The experiencer has become aware of his experience, he is 'experienced'. He has acquired a new horizon within which something can become an experience for him".[37]

According to Gadamer, it is Hegel who notices the dialectical element in experience and explains the nature of dialectical in terms of experience. Gadamer writes, "According to Hegal, experience has the structure of a reversal of consciousness and hence it is a dialectical movement. Hegel behaves, of course, as if what is generally meant by experience were something else, in that in general we 'experience the falsehood of this first concept through another object' (and not in such a way the object itself changes). But it is only apparently different. In actual fact the philosophical mind realizes what the experiencing mind is really doing when it proceeds from one to the other: it is turning round. Thus Hegel declares that it is the true nature of experience to turn round in this way''.[38] Since experience is experience of negation, what is negated is not merely the previous knowledge of object but also the object experienced previously is negated and a transformed object is posited instead which is such that the new object contains the truth concerning the old one. The twofold transformation of knowledge and its object, involved in the dialectical element of experience is very significant. The process of establishment of unity of experience with the certainty of himself, i.e., his whole life requires that consciousness recognizes itself in what is alien and different. It is here that consciousness undergoes the reversal of direction. According to Gadamer, ''Whether the movement of experience is realized as an expansion into the manifoldness of the contents or as the emergence of continually new forms of mind, the necessity of which is understood by philosophical science, in any case it is a reversal of consciousness. Hegel's dialectical description of experience has some truth''.[39] But inspite of having noticed the true dialectical elements of experience Hegel misrepresents the true nature of experience. This is because, ''For Hegel, it is necessary ... that the movement of consciousness, experience should lead to a self-knowledge that no longer has anything different or alien to itself. For him the perfection of experience is 'science', the certainty of itself in knowledge. Hence his criterion of experience is that of self-knowledge. That is why the dialectic of experience must end with the overcoming of all experience, which is attained in absolute knowledge, i.e., in the complete identity of consciousness and object''.[40]

Hegel's philosophy of the absolute self-consciousness does not do justice to the hermeneutical consciousness. Here, the nature of experience is conceived in terms of that which goes beyond experience. According to Gadamer, ''The truth of experience always contains an orientation towards new experience. That is why a person who is called 'experienced' has become such not only through experiences, but is also open to new experiences. The perfection of his experience, the perfect form of what we call 'experienced', does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its own fulfillment not in the definitive knowledge, but in that openness to experience that is encouraged by experience itself''.[41]

This introduces a new element in experience. "It is that experience which must constantly be acquired and from which none can be exempt. Experience here is something that is part of the historical nature of man ... experience in this sense involves inevitably many disappointments of one's expectations and only thus is experience acquired ... Every experience worthy of the name runs counter to our expectation. Thus, the historical nature of man contains an essential element of a fundamental negativity that emerges in the relation between experience and insight''.[42] For, insight "always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive. Thus insight always involves an element of self-knowledge and constitutes a necessary side of what we called experience in the proper sense. Insight too is something to which we come. It too is ultimately part of the nature of a man, i.e., to be discerning and insightful''.[43] Aeschylus' expression 'learning through suffering' (*pathei mathos*) is also the formula expressing the inner historicality of experience, according to Gadamer. This expression of Aeschylus not only expresses the age-old truth of human experience that we become wise through suffering, and that a more correct understanding of things must first be acquired through the disappointment of being deceived and then undeceived, but also expresses the reason why it is so, i.e., it also expresses the knowledge of the limitations of humanity which gave birth to Greek tragedy. "Thus experience is experience of human finitude. The truly experienced man is one who is aware of this, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future. The experienced man knows the limitedness of all prediction and the uncertainty of all plans. In him is realized the truth-value of experience. It is characteristic of every phase of the process of experience that the experienced person acquires a new openness to new experiences ...''.[44]

Hence, for Gadamer, "Real experience is that in which man becomes aware of his finiteness. In it are discovered the limits of the power and the self-knowledge of his planning reason''.[45] Experience proves that it is an illusion that is harbored by modernity that everything can be reversed or changed by human planning, that at any historical time everything that we set as our goals can be achieved with human planning. We as persons belonging to history must have insight into the limitations within which the future is still open to expectation and planning or, even more fundamentally, that all the expectation and planning of finite beings is finite and limited. "Thus true experience is that of one's own historicality''.[46]

Section 6: The Element of Openness in *Erfahrung* and Question

It was mentioned above that the openness of experience to new experience is a crucial element of *Erfahrung*. Gadamer examines extensively the logical structure of openness involved in experience. In his view, "The openness that is part of experience is, from a logical point of view, the openness of being this or that. It has the structure of a question".[47] According to Gadamer, "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities".[48] So for Gadamer, "It is clear that the structure of question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions. The recognition that an object is different and not as we first thought, obviously involves the question whether it was this or that".[49]

It was noted above that the dialectical negativity of experience finds its fulfillment in the idea of a real experience, in which we become aware of our absolute finitude and limited being. Similarly, the logical form of the question, and the negativity that is part of it, find their fulfillment in a radical negativity: the knowledge of not knowing, which is Socratic *docta ignorantia.*

It is essential for a question to have sense. Now sense involves direction. Hence, the sense of the meaningful question is the direction in which alone the answer can be given. A question places that which is questioned within a particular perspective. The emergence of the question is the opening of the being of the object within a particular perspective. Hence, the logos that sets out this opened-up being is already an answer, whose sense lies in the sense of the question. Hence, according to Gadamer, "It is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them".[50] The logos that sets out the opened-up being of the object of investigation by asking meaningful question is a genuine discourse. False discourse fails in this task. Asking of right questions is a difficult task because, "In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, which involves knowing that one does not know",[51] which is not so easy to accomplish. Hence, we need to recognize the priority of the question in all knowledge and discourse that really reveals something of an object. Discourse that is intended to reveal something requires that, that thing be opened up by the question first.

According to Gadamer, "dialectic proceeds by way of question and answer", i.e., "by way of the development of all knowledge through the question".[52] Gadamer vividly describes what it amounts to when a question arises in discourse. "To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. It must still be undetermined, in order that a decisive answer can be given. The revelation of the questionability of what is questioned constitutes the sense of the question. The object has to be brought into this state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium betwen pro and contra. The sense of every question is realized in passing through this state of indeterminacy, in which it becomes an open question. Every true question achieves this openness. If it lacks this, then it is basically no more than an apparent question''.[53] Gadamer gives examples of what are apparent questions and not genuine questions: the pedagogical question and the rhetorical question. The pedagogical question is a question without a questioner. The rhetorical question has neither a questioner nor any object to question.

Even though Gadamer emphasizes the openness involved in a genuine question he warns, ''The openness of the question is not boundless. It is limited by the horizon of the question''.[54] When a question's openness is not limited it is a 'floating' question. It becomes a genuine question only when the fluid indeterminacy of the direction in which it is pointing is overcome by a specification of alternative ways of answering it. When the question is merely 'floating' it is not asked. A question is asked only when not only the object is brought to the openness of its multiple possibilities but also when the possibilities are limited by specifying them. The asking of a question implies openness, but also limitation. In asking a question one explicitly establishes the presuppositions of the question, in terms of which can be seen what still remains open. This provides Gadamer with a criterion of right and wrong question. ''Hence a question can be right or wrong, according as it reaches into the sphere of the truly open or fails to do so. We call a question false that does not reach the state of openness, but inhibits it by holding on to false presuppositions''.[55] A false question pretends to an openness and susceptibility to decision that it does not have. To ask a right question what is undecided about the object of the question needs to be correctly distinguished from those presuppositions that are effectively held regarding the object of question, otherwise the object of the question is not brought into the open and nothing can be decided about it.

As it is the case with the false question, there can be no answer to the distorted question also because it leads us only apparently, and not really, through the open state of indeterminacy in which a decision is made. Gadamer explains what is a distored question that we are so familiar with in everyday life. ''We call it distorted rather than false because there is a question behind it, i.e., there is an openness intended, but it does not lie in the direction in which the distorted question is pointing. The word 'distored', refers to something that has moved away from the right direction. The distortedness of a question consists in the fact that it does not have any real direction, and hence any answer to it is impossible''.[56] Gadamer relates distorted questions to distorted statements. Those statements are called 'distorted' that are not exactly false, but also not right. The distorted statement is an answer to a distorted question. The sense of a statement is determined by its relation to the question to which it is an answer. We cannot call a distorted statement false, because we detect something true about it as there is an openness of a question behind the distorted question; nor can we properly call it right because it does not correspond to any meaningful question. Hence, a distorted statement has no correct meaning unless the question behind it is itself correct. Since, sense is always the direction of a possible question, the sense of what is correct must be in accordance with the direction taken by a question.

According to Gadamer, ''Knowledge is dialectical from the ground up. Only a person who has questions can have knowledge ...''.[57] The basis of the concept of knowledge, for Gadamer, lies in the priority of the question over the answer. Because a question brings the object to the open, it always includes both negative and positive possibilities of the object. This opening up of the multiple possibilities of the object is the basis of the essential relation between question and knowledge. ''For it is the essence of knowledge not only to judge something correctly, but at the same time and for the same reason to exclude what is wrong. The deciding of the question is the way to knowledge. What decides a question is the preponderance of reasons for the one and against the other possibility. But this is still not full knowledge. The thing itself is known only through the dissolution of the counter-instances, only when the counter-arguments are seen to be incorrect''.[58] So knowledge always requires, precisely, looking at opposites. The superiority of knowledge over preconceived opinion consists in the fact that it is able to conceive of possibilities as possibilities.

The priority of the question in knowledge shows in the most basic way the limited role of the idea of method for knowledge. According to Gadamer, ''There is no such thing as a method of learning to ask questions, of learning to see what needs to be questioned. ... All questioning and desire to know presupposes a knowledge that one does not know; so much so, indeed, that it is a particularly lack of knowledge that leads to a particular question''.[59] But it is not easy to know that we do not know. Plato shows what makes it so difficult to know that we do not know. Explaining Plato's position in this regard Gadamer writes, "It is the power of opinion against which it is so hard to obtain an admission of ignorance. It is opinion that suppresses questions. Opinion has a curious tendency to propagate itself. It would always like to be the general opinion, just as the word that the Greeks have for opinion, doxa, also means the decision made by the majority in the council assembly. How, then, can the admission of ignorance and questioning emerge"?[60] The realization of one's own ignorance and questioning emerges like a sudden idea, without any methodological procedure being followed. But we also know that sudden thoughts do not come entirely unexpectedly. Expectation of an idea always points in the direction of an area of openness from which the idea can come, i.e., they presuppose questions. "The real nature of the sudden idea is perhaps less the sudden realization of the solution to a problem than the sudden realization of the question that advances into openness and thus makes an answer possible. Every sudden idea has the structure of a question. But the sudden realization of the question is already a breach in the smooth front of popular opinion. Hence we say that a question too 'comes' to us, that it 'arises' or 'presents itself' more than that we raise it or present it".[61]

A genuine question being a breach of opinion, it is related to dialectical negativity of experience discussed above. Logically, the negativity of experience implies a question. In fact, we have experiences through the stimulus given by that which does not fit in with preconceived opinion. Hence, for Gadamer, "Thus questioning too is more a 'passion' than an action. A question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion".[62] Unless a question arises we can have no experience. An experience decides in favour of one of the possibilities opened up by the question and decides against other possibilities especially favoured by opinion. An experience is an answer to a question that has emerged prior to the experience.

Here one may question Gadamer: Is it not the case that the Socratic-Platonic dialectic raises the art of questioning to a conscious art? Does this art not go against Gadamer's claim that there is no method of asking questions? Gadamer has an answer, "... there is something peculiar about this art. We have seen that it is reserved to the person who desires to know, i.e., who already has questions. The art of questioning is not the art of avoiding the pressure of opinion; it already presupposes this freedom. It is not an art in the sense that the Greeks speak of techne, not a craft that can be taught and by means of which we would master the knowledge of truth. The so-called epistemological digression of the seventh *Letter* is directed, rather, to distinguish the unique character of this strange art of dialectic from everything that can be taught and learned. The art of dialectic is not the art of being able to win every argument. On the contrary, it is possible that someone who is practicing the art of dialectic, i.e., the art of questioning and seeking truth, comes off worse in the argument in the eyes of those listening to it. Dialectic, as the art of asking questions, proves itself only because the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation towards openness. The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions, i.e., the art of thinking. It is called 'dialectic', for it is the art of conducting a real conversation''.[63]

Section 7: Gadamer on What is *Erfahrung* (Hermeneutic Experience)

This leads us to hermeneutic experience as hermeneutic experience shares in the nature of conversation, and also contains the structure of question and answer. For, ''The hermeneutical experience is concerned with what has been transmitted in tradition. This is what is to be experienced''.[64] But how is tradition experienced? Tradition cannot be experienced as an object in the positivist sense. Tradition is not an 'it', rather ''it is language, i.e., it expresses itself like a 'Thou'''.[65] According to Gadamer's explanation, ''A 'Thou' is not an object, but stands in a relationship with us. It would be wrong to think that this meant that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the meaning of another person, who is a 'Thou'. Rather, we consider that the understanding of tradition does not take the text as an expression of life of a 'Thou', but as a meaningful content detached from all bonds of the meaning individual, of an 'I' or a 'Thou' ... For tradition is a genuine partner in communication, with which we have fellowship as does the 'I' with a 'Thou'''.[66] Since the 'Thou' is not an object but stands in relationship with us, in hermeneutic experience the object of experience has itself the character of a person. Hence, hermeneutic experience is a moral phenomenon. The element of ethicality makes the structure of experience undergo change, when it is experience of the 'Thou' and when it is hermeneutical experience.

If we model the experience of the 'Thou' according to the positivist conception of experience, then we seek to discover knowledge of human nature, in terms of natural laws that govern the typical behaviour of one's fellow men to be able to make predictions concerning another person on the basis of experience. So, in such experiences, behaviour of other fellow men becomes as much means to our end as any other means. From the moral point of view this attitude to the 'Thou' is defective as it is directed ultimately towards oneself and contradicts the moral definition of man. Ethics requires, as Kant claimed, that the other should never be used as a means only, but always as an end in himself. If we model the experience of the 'Thou' in this way, then we do not conceive ourselves as standing in any moral relationship to the 'Thou' and hence, lose our moral personality *vis-à-vis* that 'Thou'.

When 'Thou' is the tradition in such hermeneutic experience then the objective knowledge here is the objective knowledge of the tradition. The person who confronts the tradition in this way makes the tradition an object, i.e., he confronts it in a free and uninvolved way, and, by methodically excluding all subjective element in regard to it, he discovers what it contains objectively. The person by withdrawing from the continuation of the relationship with the tradition makes himself free to destroy it as an object if his judgment goes against its further existence and to preserve it if it is a useful means to some subjective end. In short, he manipulates the tradition, and the tradition comes to an end.

There is a second kind of hermeneutic experience of 'Thou' where a 'Thou' is acknowledged to be a person, but 'I' relates to 'Thou' reflectively and mediately and not immediately and unreflectively. Although 'I-Thou' relation is always there already yet 'I' behaves as if 'I' initiates the dialogue with self-consciousness, and tries to conduct the conversation. And, of course, so does the 'Thou' if it is a living person. In this dialogue there is a counter-claim to every claim. One's intention is opposed by another's intention. It is possible for each partner in this kind of dialogue to outdo the other if it is a dialogue of living persons. In their attempt to carry through their intention each partner claims to understand and express the other's claim and intention better than he does himself. In this way, 'Thou' loses the immediacy with which it makes its claim, and also loses the immediacy of relationship with the 'I'. In this kind of dialogue 'Thou' is understood, i.e., it is anticipated and intercepted by the consciousness of 'I' reflectively. That is to say, 'I' tries to get at the intention behind everything that the 'Thou' says. Hence, in this 'I-Thou' relation 'Thou' is also forced to stand in this relationship reflectively. Both partners relate to each other self-consciously, reflectively through mediation of their self-consciousness and hence, mediately and not immediately or directly.

In this kind of experience of the 'Thou' there is constant struggle to be recognized by the consciousness of the other. In this relationship there can be varied degrees of tension ranging from one extreme to the other: one extreme being the point of complete domination of one partner by the other and the other extreme possibility being balance of equal mutual coercion. That there is dialectic of mediated reciprocity in this kind of 'I-Thou' relation is hidden from the consciousness of the partners of the dialogue. The person who dominates in this kind of relationship is not even aware that his own personal aims and aspirations are involved in doing this. "In fact his own self-awareness consists precisely in his withdrawing from the dialectic of this reciprocity, in his reflecting himself out of this relation to the other and so becoming unreachable by him. By understanding the other by claiming to know him, one takes from him all justification of his own claims. The claim to understand the other person in advance performs the function of keeping the claim of the other person at a distance. We are familiar with this from the educative relationship, and authoritative form of welfare work".[67]

When the tradition is the 'Thou' of 'I-Thou' relation of this kind of hermeneutic experience, 'I' seeks to master the tradition by recognizing the otherness of the historical consciousness of the tradition from his own consciousness. The other consciousness is the unique historical consciousness. Here, the 'I' conceives himself as not prejudiced by his own prejudices in recognizing the consciousness of the other. But it is a false appearance. His prejudices in the form of intentionality to dominate the tradition are already operating in the recognition of 'Thou' as the unique historical consciousness. An interlocutor, who imagines that his own prejudices are not involved when he has the objective knowledge of the unique historical consciousness, is under an illusion. He is not aware of his desire to dominate and win against the other. He is not aware that he has reflectively reflected himself out of the mutuality and immediacy of relationship in which he stands to the tradition, and has destroyed the moral bond of the true dialogue. A person who reflects himself out of a living relationship to the tradition has destroyed the true meaning of the tradition that is common to them both.

The living tradition is hermeneutically experienced in a different kind of 'I-Thou' relation. Here, 'Thou' is fully recognized as a person, and he stands in moral relationship to 'I'. This relation is based on openness, which is the necessary element of true experience. Without this openness to each other there is no genuine corporate relationship. Belonging together always means being able to listen to one another.

In the 'I-Thou' structure of dialogue of this kind with the tradition, the tradition is not experienced as an object that expresses the meaning of another person, who is a 'Thou'. When we interpret the tradition it is not taken as an expression of the life of the 'Thou'. Rather, the tradition itself is the 'Thou' of 'I-Thou' structure. It is a meaningful whole detached from individuals who belong to it. The tradition is the genuine partner in communication with which 'I' has a fellowship of 'I-Thou' structure. The tradition itself has the character of a person. In this kind of hermeneutic experience, which is the highest form of hermeneutic experience, 'I' is required to listen with openness to what the tradition says. In Hermeneutic experience of living tradition we keep ourselves open to the claim to truth encountered in it, and allow the tradition to question us.

In the context of true hermeneutic experience, the dialogue with the tradition is not conducted by the will of the partner in the dialogue, i.e. 'Thou' or 'I'. It is a kind of conversation, which is not started but we find ourselves already involved in the dialogue. Hence, the object of the dialogue or the topic of conversation conducts the conversation and guides the partners in a dialogue. To put it in a different terminology, the partners are not the *kartṛ* of the dialogue but only *nimitta* of it. But in the second kind of hermeneutic experience of 'Thou', each partner to the conversation behaves like a *kartṛ* of the dialogue and not as *nimitta* of it. In a true hermeneutic dialogue the outcome of the dialogue is not known in advance by any partner. The understanding of the topic happens to the partners. It is like *daiva.* "All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language used in it bears its own truth within it, it reveals something which henceforth exists".[68]

A genuine hermeneutic dialogue requires first of all that the partners to it do not talk at cross purposes. Hence, its necessary structure is that of question and answers. The first condition of the art of conversation is to ensure that the person is with us. In a hermeneutic experience it is this requirement of conversation that makes us stand in moral relation to the tradition. It is the inner logic with which the development of the topic proceeds in the conversation. "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed".[69] Hence, another requirement of hermeneutic dialogue is that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence, art of conversation is an art of testing. The art of testing is the art of questioning. To question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. A person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of question by the dominant opinion. But at the same time a person who possesses the art of conversation will himself seek for everything in favour of an opinion to bring out its real strength by referring to the object. Hence, it is the immanent objective logic of the opinions expressed by partners to conversation, which is unfolded in the dialogue by the art of conversation. Hence, this art has the maieutic productivity of the art of using words as a midwife. Hence, in a hermeneutic conversation, "What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the subjective opinions of the partners to the dialogue that even the person leading the conversation is always ignorant".[70]

According to Gadamer, "Dialectic as the art of conducting a conversation is also the art of seeing things in the unity of an aspect (*sunoran eis hen eidos*) i.e., it is the art of the formation of concepts as the working out of the common meaning".[71] In dialogue, language, in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point, performs the communication of this common meaning. Hence, the work of hermeneutic experience as a conversation with the text of tradition is to reawaken this original common meaning. "That the interpretation that achieves this takes place through language does not mean that it is a translation into a foreign medium, but represents the restoration of the original communication of meaning. Thus, that which is handed down in literary form is brought back out of the alienation in which it finds itself and into the living presence of conversation, whose fundamental procedure is always question and answer".[72]

In the context of true hermeneutic experience the two partners understand each other. It is a characteristic of this kind of hermeneutic dialogue that "each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual, but what he says".[73]

In this kind of hermeneutic experience truth prevails and the truth and significance is brought into the light of language and consciousness and hence, "the thing that has to be grasped is objective rightness or otherwise of his opinion, so that they can agree with each other on the subject".[74] This kind of dialogue begins in agreement on the topic to be understood and through opening up the various possibilities open to the partners, also concludes in agreement on the true character and singnificance of the topic.

In the context of true hermeneutic experience we find a common language to express the significance and the truth and "this finding of a common language is not ... the preparation of a tool for the purpose of understanding, but, rather coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement".[75] So in the context of true hermeneutic experience of the tradition "a communication takes place, as between two people, that is more than a mere adaptation. The text brings an object into language, but that it achieves this is ultimately the work of the interpreter. Both have a share in it".[76]

In the successful completion of a true hermeneutic dialogue both the partners stand in greater solidarity of being an 'We'. But when one emerges out of the second kind of hermeneutic experience, the feeling of being misunderstood is uppermost. That he has to say this or that further to clear the misunderstanding is uppermost in the mind of the person. But this desire to be understood and recognized is an illusion in the second kind of hermeneutic experience. It is a desire impossible to fulfill since the other partner has reflected himself out of relationship and hence, unapproachable however long the dialogue is conducted in time. The partner is seeking to find intention behind everything that is said to him in this kind of dialogue. Hence, through this kind of dialogue one never reaches a point of agreement with the partner. When one emerges out of a first kind of hermeneutic dialogue one has the feeling of being perceived as a pathological specimen by the other, that there he was not listened to at all, let alone being misunderstood or understood. There is a feeling that the other is treating him as an object and not listening to him at all. With full self-control and self-possession the other is methodically trying to control, restrain and destory him by means of language. In this kind of dialogue the dialogical notions are a sham and a pretence and do not constitute a true dialogue.

Section 8: Conditions of *Erfahrung* and the Law of *Karma*

In the context of dialogue of hermeneutic experience the partner in conversation as well as the object of conversation is one and the same, i.e., the tradition. The partner of the conversation is required to be with us and as object of discussion it must be opened up. Since it is bounded openness that is required for hermeneutic dialogue, and openness presupposes ignorance of the object and boundedness presupposes knowledge of the object, the tradition must be with us in a manner such that we have both knowledge as well as ignorance of tradition. The being of tradition with us with knowledge and ignorance is described beautifully by Gadamer: "Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a relation to the object that comes into language in the transmitted text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition out of which the text speaks. On the other hand, hermeneutical consciousness is aware that it cannot be connected with this object in some self-evident unquestioned way, as is the case with the unbroken stream of a tradition. There is a polarity of familiarity and strangeness on which hermeneutic work is based: only that this polarity is not to be seen, psychologically, with Schleiermacher, as the tension that conceals the mystery of individuality, but truly hermeneutically, i.e., in regard to what has been said: the language in which the text addresses us, the story that it tells us. Here too there is a tension. The place between strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text has for us is that intermediate place between being an historically intended object and being part of a tradition. The true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area".[77] It is the temporal distance between us and the transmitted tradition that ensures the polarity of familiarity and strangeness. According to Gadamer, "Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome ... In fact the important thing is to recognize the distance in time as a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us. Here it is not too much to speak of a genuine productivity of process".[78] Temporal distance makes the objective knowledge of the tradition possible. The intrinsic content of the tradition first appears only after it is divorced from the fleeting circumstances of its actuality. Historical distance makes the historical event self-contained, which allows it to appear as a whole, and also gives it a distance from the opinions concerning its import with which the present is filled. The permanent significance of tradition can first be known objectively only when it belongs within a self-contained context, in other words, when it is dead enough to have only historical interest. Only then does it seem possible to exclude the subjective involvement of the observer. The hermeneutic requirement of temporal distance is automatically fulfilled when a historical context has become of no more than historical interest.

If the temporal distance introduces the element of alienation and strangeness which needs to be overcome through understanding, yet the continuity of custom and tradition, despite the temporal distance, introduces the element of familiarity and knowledge in the hermeneutic experience. The continuity of custom and tradition is manifested in the historicality of the interpreter. True historical thinking is itself historical for it embodies the effects of history in the form of prejudices. Our openness to understanding does not mean that we present ourselves as a blank slate, without any prejudice ready to be inscribed. History is prior to the interpreter and has a predetermined influence on him. Prejudices, which from the point of view of enlightenment rationalism appear as obstacles to understanding, are historical reality itself and the condition of understanding the text of tradition. It is the history and tradition that prejudices us. These prejudices, i.e., the prior understanding of the units of significance, which introduce the element of familiarity in hermeneutic experience, are the media by which the history of our being-in-the-tradition becomes accessible to our understanding. Hence, Gadamer is right when he claims, "The true historical object is not an object at all, but the unity of the one and the other, a relationship in which exists both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding".[79] Object of hermeneutic experience is not an object standing against a subject experiencing it. The hermeneutic object is the unity of hermeneutic experience and the object of hermeneutic experience. It is a case of distinction without a difference.

No doubt, temporal distance lets the true meaning of the object of hermeneutic experience emerge fully, yet the discovery of the true meaning of a text of tradition is never finished; it is, in fact, an infinite process. The temporal distance is not a closed dimension, but is itself undergoing constant movement and extension. Temporal distance is also a filtering process. Through it not only are fresh sources of error constantly excluded, so that the true meaning has filtered out of all kinds of things that obscure it, but simultaneously the temporal distance is also productive as in it emerge continually new sources of understanding, which reveal unsuspected elements of meaning. According to Gadamer, temporal distance only lets those prejudices that are of a particular and limited nature, die away, but causes those that bring about genuine understanding to emerge clearly as such. Temporal distance solves the critical question of hermeneutics, namely of distinguishing the true prejudices, by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand.

The way temporal distance solves the critical problem of distinguishing the true prejudices from the false ones is a complex process involving what Indian thinkers called 'law of *karma*'. What is designated by Gadamer as prejudices is designated variously as *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa,* etc., by Indian thinkers. Critical function of distinguishing true from false prejudices requires consciousness of our own prejudices. When we become conscious of the prejudices governing our own understanding, we also succeed in isolating and valuing the text on its own, as another's meaning. According to Gadamer, "The isolation of a prejudice clearly requires the suspension of its validity for us. For so long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not know and consider it as a judgment".[80] To put in language familiar to Indian thinkers, we do not become aware of *saṁskāra or apūrva or adṛṣṭa* so long as it functions in the form of *prārabdha karma.* How then are we able to isolate it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware of it while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, stimulated. The stimulation of *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa,* is what in Indian tradition is called *karma-vipāka.* The encounter with a text of tradition provides this stimulus. The text of tradition is something that has already asserted itself in its own separate validity. Hence, it calls for understanding. Understanding begins when something addresses us from tradition. This is the primary hermeneutical condition involving familiarity of continuing tradition and strangeness of historical distance. To allow the text of tradition to address us requires the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices. But all suspension of judgments and hence, a fortiori, of prejudices, has logically the structure of a question. For Gadamer, "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities. If a prejudice becomes questionable, in view of what another or a text says to us, this does not mean that it is simply set aside and the other writing or the other person accepted as valid in its place. It shows, rather, the naiveté of historical objectivism to accept this disregarding of ourselves as what actually happens. In fact, our own prejudice is properly brought into play through its being at risk. Only through its being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for himself to have full play. (In this passage the author plays on the German expressions ins Spiel bringen, auf dem Spiele stehen and sich ausspielen)".[81] But before we discuss what this question is, which arises when a text of tradition addresses us, let us demonstrate the effectiveness of history within understanding itself, i.e., let us demonstrate how law of *karma* is operative in the hermeneutic experience.

According to Gadamer, "If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always subject to the effects of effective-history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth enquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there – in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth".[82] Whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the power of this effective-history or the law of *karma* is at work. Since effective historical consciousness, i.e., consciousness effected by history, is an element in the act of understanding itself, we need to become conscious of this effective-history, or law of *karma.*

Effective-historical consciousness is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation. To acquire an awareness of a situation is a difficult task. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence, are unable to have any objective knowledge ot it. Be it noted, some Indian thinkers also advocated that *karmas* form a *karmāśaya* which envelops us and our consciousness. *Karmāśaya* of Indian tradition corresponds to the hermeneutic situation of Gadamer. We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed. This is true also of the hermeneutic situation, i.e., the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand. Since we are essentially historical beings the illumination of hermeneutic situation – effective-historical reflection – can never be completely achieved. To exist historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete as there is no overcoming of law of *karma* in our historical life. For Gadamer, "All self-knowledge proceeds from what is historically pre-given, what we call, with Hegel, 'substance', because it is the basis of all subjective meaning and attitude and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility of understanding any tradition whatsoever in terms of its unique historical quality".[83]

Every finite present has its limitations in the form of its 'situation' that represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. The concept of situation entails the concept of 'horizon'. Explaining the idea of horizon Gadamer writes, "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point".[84] This concept of horizon can be applied to the thinking mind. We speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of the new horizons, etc., of a thinker. A person who lacks horizon of thought is a man who does not see far enough and hence, overvalues what is nearest to him. As against this, to have an horizon means not to be limited to what is nearest, but to be able to see beyond it. A person having a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, as near or as far, great or small. Similarly, the illumination of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.

Even though horizon is the limit of situation, yet it is never a closed horizon. Since we do not have a truly closed horizon, and are not utterly bound to any one standpoint, human life has historical movement. According to Gadamer, "The horizon is rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. It is not historical consciousness that first sets the surrounding horizon in motion. But in it this motion becomes aware of itself".[85] Working out the implications of moving horizon Gadamer further writes, "When our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien world unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness. Our own past, and that other past towards which our historical consciousness is directed, help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives, and which determines it as tradition".[86] The concept of the 'horizon' suggests itself in the context of understanding something alien because it expresses the wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have. To acquire an alien horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion.

This enlargement of one's horizon requires making distinctions too. Making distinctions is a reciprocal process. Whatever is being distinguished must be distinguished from something, which, in turn, must be distinguished from it. Thus, all distinguishing also makes visible that from which something is distinguished. Illumination of hermeneutic situation too involves making distinctions. Initially, before illumination, a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they present that beyond which it is impossible to see. A truly historical consciousness with illumination of hermeneutic situation always sees its own initial present in such a way that it sees itself, as it sees the historically other, within the right circumstances. But this amounts to avoiding the error of thinking that it is a fixed set of opinions and evaluations that determine and limit the horizon of the present which is illuminated, and that the otherness of the past can be distinguished from a fixed ground.

Hence, the horizon of the present is being continually formed, by testing all our prejudices through the encounter with the past and the understanding of the tradition from which we come. Hence, according to Gadamer, ''the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves''.[87]

Gadamer now anticipates an objection. ''If, however, there is no such thing as these horizons that are distinguished from one another, why do we speak of the fusion of horizons and not simply of the formation of the one horizon, whose bounds are set in the depths of tradition''?[88] Gadamer replies to this objection: ''To ask the question means that we are recognizing the special nature of the situation in which understanding becomes a scientific task, and that it is necessary to work out this situation as a hermeneutical situation. Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation but consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project an historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present. Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence distinguishes the horizon of tradition from its own. On the other hand, it is itself, as we are trying to show, only something laid over a continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines what it has distinguished in order, in the unity of the historical horizon that it thus acquires, to become again one with itself''.[89]

The distinguishing of the historical horizon from the fixed horizon of the present is only a phase in the proces of understanding. But this distinction does not lead to solidification and self-alienation of the past consciousness, but is overtaken by our own present mobile horizon of understanding. In the process of understanding there takes place a real fusing of horizons, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously removed. The conscious act of this fusion is the task of the effective-historical consciousness or consciousness governed by law of *karma*.

But how is this fusion performed by the effective-historical consciousness or consciousness governed by law of *karma*? This takes place by way of *karma-vipāka* through the logic of question and answer of hermeneutic experience. For this we have to go back to the point where the hermeneutic experience contains within itself the original meaning of conversation and the structure of question and answer.

It was mentioned before that when a historical text is made the object of interpretation it asks a question of the interpreter. Thus, hermeneutic experience always involves a relation to the question that is asked of the interpreter. To understand a text means to understand this question. This question, which the historical text asks of the interpreter, is understood by our achieving the hermeneutical horizon. But this hermeneutical horizon is also the horizon of the question within which the sense of the text is determined. Gadamer writes, "Thus a person who seeks to understand must question what lies behind what is said. He must understand it as an answer to a question. If we go back behind what is said, then we inevitably ask questions beyond what is said. We understand the sense of the text only by acquiring the horizon of the question that, as such, necessarily includes other possible answers. Thus the meaning of a sentence is relative to the question to which it is a reply, i.e. it necessarily goes beyond what is said in it. The logic of the human sciences is ... a logic of the question".[90]

The logic of question and answer has to reconstruct two different questions that have also two different answers: the question of meaning of the text and the question of whether this meaning is intended by the author. The two questions coincide only when the intention of the author coincides with the meaning of the text. But this is a presupposition that we cannot maintain as a methodological principle when concerned with hermeneutic experience. Interpreters of historical texts run the risk of hypostasizing the meaning of the text as that intended by the authors. Hemeneutic experience involves understanding of the meaning of the text. According to Gadamer, "compared with the genuine hermeneutical experience that understands the meaning of the text, the reconstruction of what the author really had in mind is a limited undertaking".[91] We shall have to investigate what are the conditions that apply to this task of understanding the meaning of the text. To understand the meaning of the text we have to understand the question to which the text is an answer.

There is no methodological procedure for the reconstruction of the question to which a given text is an answer. Then, how do we reconstruct the question to which the text is an answer? Gadamer answers, "The first thing is the question that the text presents us with, our response to the word handed down to us, so that its understanding must already include the work of historical self-mediation of present and tradition. Thus, the relation of question and answer is, in fact, reversed. The voice that speaks to us from the past – be it text, work, trace – itself poses a question and places our meaning in openness. In order to answer this question, we, of whom the question is asked, must ourselves begin to ask questions. We must attempt to reconstruct the question to which the transmitted text is the answer. But we shall not be able to do this without going beyond the historical horizon it presents us with. The reconstruction of the question to which the text is presumed to be the answer takes place itself within a process of questioning through which we seek the answer to the question that the text asks us. A reconstructed question can never stand within its original horizon: for the historical horizon that is outlined in the reconstruction is not a truly comprehensive one. It is, rather, included within the horizon that embraces us as the questioners who have responded to the word that has been handed down".[92]

Let us try to understand what it means when we say that the understanding of the word of the tradition always requires that the reconstructed question be set within the openness of its questionableness, i.e., it merges with the question that tradition is for us. This is the process of what Indian thinkers called *karma-vipāka.* To begin with we are not aware of our own prejudices, *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa* as they function in the form of *prārabdha karma.* When we encounter the text of tradition we become aware of the alienation of the text from our prejudices. This realization of alienation of the text is also the awareness and isolation of our own prejudices, *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa.* The text in its alienness also brings one of the possibilities which is alternative to our prejudices. *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa,* which operate as *prārabdha karma.* Once our prejudices, *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa* are brought to the open of the question which has other possible answers, our prejudices lose their force as *prārabdha karma.* They have now exhausted themselves in this hemeneutic experience. The question that has now emerged to which text is a possible answer has its own horizon which limits the alternatives open. Be it noted, this openness includes our own prejudices as well as the text as possibilities. Hence, the horizon of the question which has emerged is constituted by the prejudices, *saṁskāra, apūrva, adṛṣṭa* which were *anārabdha* so far and now with the emergence of the question have become operative and have become *prārabdha karma* henceforth. The horizon of the question that has emerged now encompasses both the present as well as the past as possibilities. Hence, this horizon is a fusion of horizons of the present and the past supposed to exist by themselves so far. The fusion of horizons is the exhaustion of the previous *prārabdha karma* in the hermeneutic experience and transition of some *anārabdha karma* to the stage of new *prārabdha karma.* This is also the process of acquiring *sañciyamāna karma* which is a new *anārabdha karma.* Hence, every actualization in understanding is a historical potentiality of what is understood. It is part of the historical finiteness of our being that we are aware that subsequent understanding in history of the same text will be different as different *prārabdha* and *anārabdha karma* will be involved subsequently. And yet, the text remains the same work, the fullness of whose meaning is proved in the changing process of understanding. The understanding of the text's meaning cannot be equated with deciphering the author's intention as it is fixed and not changing with historical movement.

We understand only when we understand the question to which something is the answer, and what is understood in this way does not remain detached in its meaning from our own meaning. Rather, the reconstruction of the question, from which the meaning of a text is to be understood as an answer, passes into our own questioning. For the text must be understood as an answer to a real question. This close relation between question and understanding gives the hermeneutic experience its true dimension. Questions always bring out the undetermined possibilities of a thing. To understand the questionableness of something is always to question it. A person who thinks must ask himself questions. Hence, for Gadamer, "To understand a question means to ask it. To understand an opinion is to understand it as the answer to a question".[93]

The dialectic of question and answer, disclosed in the structure of the hermeneutical experience, makes understanding appear as a reciprocal relationship of the same kind as conversation, even though a text does not speak to us in the same way as does another person. We, who understand, make it speak though the dialectic of the question and answer described above as *karma-vipāka.* This kind of understanding, 'making the text speak', is not an arbitrary procedure that we undertake on our own initiative but that, as a question, it is related to the answer that is expected in the text. The anticipation of an answer itself presumes that the person asking is part of the tradition and regards himself as addressed by it. This is the truth of the effective-historical consciousness or consciousness regulated by law of *karma*. Consciousness regulated by law of *karma* is the historically experienced consciousness which has renounced the chimera of perfect enlightenment and is open to the experience of history. The operation of law of *karma* as the fusion of the horizons of understanding or *karma vipāka* mediates between the text and its interpreter.

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4

Understanding the Story of Understanding

Chinmoy Goswami[*]

It is a fact of life that no biological organism can be treated as an absolutely isolated system. For every biological system, there is an *interior* and an *exterior*. A biological organism continuously receives *inputs* from the exterior, processes the inputs and then produces an *output*, which in effect, affects the exterior. Human organism is also such a biological organism – receiving signals, processing them and producing outputs affecting the world outside. That there is a world outside any human organism is trivially true. Equally trivial is the fact that human organism, unless it is dead, receives inputs from the outside world. Also, human organism produces [in]appropriate outputs, after processing the inputs. Two of the most significant ways that a human organism outputs the processed inputs are in the form of *speech* and *action*. However, during the recent times, there have been attempts to decipher close resemblance between speech and action [Speech Acts/ Communicative Actions].[1] Both speech and action are responses to a situation. What brings speaker and agent close to each other is the intentional content [*bhāvanā, icchā*] involved. Speech and action both are, in a sense, goal directed, *intentional*. A speaker or an agent externalizes his/her intentional content through speech and/or action. Something pertaining to the interior of a human organism is brought to the exterior by producing a sequence of sound/bringing about a change in the state of affairs. This externalizing of the intentional content presupposes a pluralistic metaphysics, a non-solipsistic world. It is a fact of life that there are other human organisms, capable of producing [in]appropriate outputs after processing the relevant inputs which, in turn, affect the environment. For a human organism all other human organisms are part of the environment. Thus, an output produced by me may, in turn, result in the production of an output by another human organism, which may affect me, being a part of his/her environment. There is thus a discourse situation, a series of interactions between the interiors and the exteriors of different human organisms.

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[*] The author has expired before the release of the book.

It is not easy to decide which came first – the idea that language is a function of human activities, or that the acts are the functions of language! Through hearing and speaking, human beings regularly take the sounds they make as signs and symbols for the succession of experiences as well as have power over them. When writing happens to supplement chanting and speaking, preserving their meanings in less perishable [often confused as unperishable, eternal] form, its shapes and modes figure, in their turn, as events, things, occasions and actions in the world. These events, actions, occasions, in the hands of human beings, are in search of further signifiers. Such artifacts open the realm of meanings of meanings. These mechanisms of constructing signs of signs of signs and so on demand meanings of meanings of meanings and so on. A human voice is at once an accompaniment and expression of his/her experience. By lending vioce, a human being discloses a condition, an attitude, an action – "Words are deeds".[2] These disclosures of human beings depend essentially on the two presuppositions – *(a)* that there are other human beings and *(b)* that there is a medium through which communication with others can be established. Others not only can understand my expressiveness, but my expressions as well. We dis-close ourselves to others hoping that others can understand our dis-closures.

This brings us face to face with the problem namely, can one, understand the other, can the self understand the non-self? Any affirmative answer will invite the question of method. Leaving the skeptics aside, two possible answers are available on the surface. One possible answer derives its inspiration from Plato. According to this approach, human beings *qua* human beings are essentially the same, whether it is the self or the non-self (other). Thus, all understanding is an understanding of the self by the self; it is self-understanding. Such a theory of understanding as only self-understanding is dependent on the view that not only understanding has an essential nature but also that human beings have an essence. All the differences are only on the surface. At a deeper level (possibly at the deepest level), there is no difference whatsoever, all differences disappear. According to this view, understanding implies abolition of all differences, denial of any change, a terminal understanding. Such a view comes very close to that of Śaṅkara.

However, the view on the other extreme denies any fixed essence to human beings. Its contention is that far from being the same or even displaying different images of the same essence, human beings are, in fact, different. It holds that what an individual human being is at an instant of time depends on the *facticity,* on the socio-politico-spatio-temporal location, on the *situatedness.* Understanding, therefore, would consist precisely in understanding of an *other* by an *other.* The very act of understanding would imply going beyond oneself towards the other, going beyond the actual and delving deep into the realm of the possible. As to how such a disclosure of the other is possible or how the possible is actualized, are questions by themselves. The point is that an understanding of the other is only possible to the extent the self can *project* itself and *engulf* the disclosed other. Thus, understanding has an element of variability depending upon the extent of projection and engulfing. Such a view was initiated by Dilthey[3] and by now, there are many protagonists of *verstehen* or empathy. Even for the protagonists of *verstehen,* the Platonic ghost looms large. This version denies any essence to human beings but falls back on the essential notion of understanding as the self-understanding, though unachievable. Such a view comes very close to the Buddhists. However, neither the Platonists nor the Diltheyans reach the drastic conclusion that under either set of presuppositions, ultimate understanding culminates in non-expressiveness, in silence, in inaction. If the other is the same as the self, interaction and discourse ceases. On the other hand, if the other is different from the self, interaction and discourse cannot even take off. Human beings long and desire for dis-closing the self due to their finitude and ignorance. Such longings and desires are, according to Śaṅkara, due to illusion which creates differentiations and multiplicity, which again create the *other.* The same human desires and longings, for the Enlightened One, the Buddha, give rise to the illusion of permanence, the *self.* This seems to be a paradoxical situation – we express ourselves to others, we dis-close ourselves to others, hoping to be understood by others, but others cannot understand ourselves fully (as if we understand our selves fully!). The paradoxicality is one of the philosopher's creations. In actual practice, we act and speak in order to express ourselves. We are more often understood by others than not. We also understand others' actions and utterances with admirable ease provided one has the desire to understand. We also misunderstand others with greater ease when we rely on our introspection too heavily. Obviously, there is hardly any paradox in real life situations. The paradox itself is an expression of our own obsession with the Platonic-Cartesian philosophy of introspection as the superior mode of enquiry in search of knowledge and understanding.

A fact which most philosophers tend to forget while philosophising is that we begin our lives as infants and not as grown ups. As an infant, one is more a receiver than a giver. We have to rely more often than not on *others* to learn about the surrounding environment. Even self-understanding comes from without, not to speak of the understanding of others. Interesting studies have shown that an individual's role as a receiver does not end with infancy. On the contrary, throughout one's life reliance on others for an understanding of the self and the external reality is inevitable. Knowledge and understanding of our own inwardness also comes from without and not from within. Knowledge of selves, as such, whether one's own or that of others' is based on actions and interactions with a whole range of human environment. The human environment even determines what will eventually be found through introspection. Once we grow up, we make use of our self understanding in judging and understanding others. Perhaps no one is free from this procedure of projecting the self-image onto others. But if we judge the inwardness of others solely through the filter of our readymade own self-image, then the understanding of others' inwardness is to be replaced by the projection of our own inwardness. Through such a (mis)adventure, we come to understand what we had already understood before. The claim that by being adults, we can judge and understand others' inwardness solely by projecting our own inwardness onto others entails either unwillingness or incapability on our part to learn further. Nevertheless, in the process of reaching this finished (if there is any) adulthood, one has to open his/her mind more often to understand the inwardness of others' expressions, especially the verbal ones. Otherwise, we would not have possessed our own inwardness on which we rely so much.

Understanding presupposes expressiveness. Expressiveness presupposes the existence of *others*. The fundamental presupposition of expressiveness is that it is addressed to an *other*, who can come to an understanding of what is expressed. It is not the case that expressions, by themselves, logically require an 'other' as an objective or mechanical terminus of a message. One may indulge in soliloquy. Most of us do quite often. However, it is only through an 'other' that the self reveals itself and comes to self-understanding. Even in soliloquy, one uses language to plan, to articulate, to identify. In such cases, one may say that the self reveals it to itself. We must be able to understand the *other* before we can understand ourselves. Self-understanding presupposes an understanding of the other. Without an understanding of the other, there is no self even, not to speak of self-understanding. Human beings are expressive, rather too eager to express themselves. We display ourselves. It is true that through the ages, we have invented systems upon systems of constructed and manipulable expressions and symbols culminating in speech and imagery. Such constructed and manipulable devices have opened up entirely new dimensions of understanding and misunderstanding, openness and concealment, truth and falsity. Our ancient ancestors were hardly aware of the bizarre surroundings in which we find ourselves today. Expressiveness among them was much too direct and straightforward as the present day complex artifacts were not available to them. Nevertheless, the overwhelming role of these artifacts must not conceal the fact that the role played by direct apprehension at the intuitive level forms the basis of all understanding. I look at a girl and she smiles. Something passes between us without which there could not have been any understanding. The smile obviously comes to me from without, its locus is first and always another face. Only by seeing the smile on others' faces I learn to communicate with a smile or a grin. The point that emerges is that expressiveness presupposes an other while understanding generates the notion of a self. This *selfing,* bringing others into one's own *fold,* is an essential feature of any understanding while *othering* of the self makes expressiveness possible.

Our understanding of each other in everyday life is generally unproblematic. One thing that makes our everyday understanding less problematic in practice is the existence of a large variety of shared background assumptions and conventions among the participants. The sharing of background conditions, assumptions and conventions is largely due to a common upbringing amidst a cultural milieu. We learn to speak the same language, we adopt similar behavioural norms, we relate ourselves to common myths, we inherit a common cultural narrative, and thereby we learn to interact with people in the expected manner. It is as though the culture-bound norms and myths provide the *schema* for actions and interactions. Everyday human action, within a culture, is to be viewed as an attempt to exemplify the cultural norms and myths, enacting the cultural narrative. This is supposed to be the mechanism through which the subjective intentions are externalized and objectified, the disclosure is documented, and particular expressions receive their meanings. Understanding of actions and interactions, therefore, is culture-bound as if all our actions and interactions were attempts to locate their respective positions in a fixed text. Cross cultural understanding is a mirage since a sentence from one text can hardly form a part of another. Trying to understand actions and interactions of another culture is trying to locate a sentence from *Mahābhārata* in the *Holy Bible.*

This cultural relativity thesis, though quite attractive seems to be still trapped in the quagmire of the hermeneutic circle. It achieves only limited success, if it has succeeded at all, in opening the gates for an understanding of the *other*. Such a thesis no doubt allows the possibility of expressiveness, but only for the fellow beings belonging to the same culture. Understanding of the goings on in another culture remains opaque and inaccessible. Where there is no will there is no way. The difficulties of opacity regarding understanding of other cultures are not actualities but are imposed hypotheses. Other cultures by virtue of being the *other,* are inferior and thus, there is no need to penetrate into them. Such conclusions of opacity and inaccessibility are not derived from data but are accepted a priori in order to perpetuate a myth of cultural superiority, to maintain a core-periphery-outside trichotomy. Moreover, the thesis of cultural relativity is not only based on the false assumptions that culture is something static and homogeneous, but if pursued to its logical conclusion, is bound to end up in solipsism. The programme of such cultural relativity thesis, structurally similar to that of Christian Missionaries, is to export Western model of 'culture' and 'progress' throughout the world while maintaining control over the definitions and redefinitions of what to count as 'culture' and 'progress'. Such ideas are outcomes of the presupposition of a homogeneous mono-cultural, mono-linguistic existence – one nation, one culture, one language. It is assumed that an individual is a member of only one cultural group and has a fixed role to play. An individual's role is taken for granted as given, fixed and determinate. Individuals are viewed as slotted into such a role and expected to behave in conformity with it. A human individual, as a member of a community, is to be viewed as a standardized being, stripped off from his/her individuality. An exercise of freedom on the part of an individual makes him/her a 'deviant' and the entire social machinery is turned against him/her to 'control'. Kierkegaard has lamented that we continue to be a generalized man and this makes our existence inauthentic.

In actual practice, this is usually not the case. An individual's responses, even within a role, are never purely in conformity as the individual necessarily acts on the basis of his/her *interpretation* of the inputs. The nonconformity makes 'progress' possible. The dynamics and hence, the survival of a group depends heavily on such nonconformity. Individuals interpret any role through their previous biographical experiences. These provide the individual sets of meanings through which they give their own interpretation to the role. Indeed, responses even within a role always involve certain amount of re-defining and re-working on the expectations regarding the way the individual should respond and the way the individual desires to respond. Responses of an individual assuming a role are partly constructions since role expectations never fully specify the nature of the responses an individual in that role must make. It is not even possible to specify the nature of responses for all possible action situations, for all possible act individuations. Moreover, an individual is a member of many groups and societies simultaneously. Also an individual plays different roles, even within a group, simultaneously. It seems that human beings, by nature, are multi-cultural and multi-lingual. We inherit multiple narratives of different cultures and sub-cultures. Thus, there is no reason to assume that an individual's role is fixed. On the contrary, an individual is reading and writing multiple narratives all the time. From very early childhood individuals learn to adopt others' roles. For example, a child while playing with her doll, sometimes assumes the role of the mother, that of a teacher, and so on. In other words, she constructs some naughty behaviour of her doll as a child, and tries to view it alternatively through the eyes of an affectionate mother or a strict teacher. Such many textured understanding of the imagined naughty behaviour lends greater substantiality to the imagination. The *othering* of the self helps to objectify or de-subjectify the intentions while a *selfing* of the other enables one to subjectify others' subjective intentions. Hence, not only an understanding of the present activities but also the histories of our own as well as of other nations and cultures make sense to us.

We have been trying to formulate some of the diverse problems associated with the act of understanding. One of the problems, we have noted, is the dual nature of having an interior and an exterior or an involvement of subjectivity as well as objectivity (non-subjectivity). Also, we have been trying to focus the point that understanding is closely related to expressiveness or expressions. It is primarily the expressions available outside the human organism that serve as inputs which produce an understanding inside the organism through some processing. The understanding inside may prompt the individual to express, to produce an output. The output or the expression may, in turn, become an object of understanding. This takes the form of a discourse, a gradual unfolding of a succession of expressions and understandings. Most expressions are responses to some stimuli. Something coming from outside (an expression), through an understanding, prompts the agency to express and put forth in the outside realm. An object of understanding gets subjectified through the process of understanding, and in turn, gets externalized through expressions.

The source of many of the paradoxes lies in an underlying conviction or a myth of *Absolute Objectivity*. The myth of absolute objectivity leads to the assumption that there is some transcendental form – THE UNDERSTANDING of every particular expression. There is no reason to believe that there is any transcendental THE UNDERSTANDING of any particular expression, apart from the expression itself. A linguistic expression is necessarily an abstraction, a cut out segment stripped off from its concrete embodiment from a series and considered as a unit. A segment of a continuous series manifests a unit constituent by constituent. The manifestation of a unit at the physical level occurs in its own physical or linear time, with a physical sequentiality of its own by following a routine.[4] The physical sequentiality invokes in the observer's mind the abstract representation. We may take the examples, ''Chinmoy is presenting a paper on understanding'' and ''Chinmoy is uttering syllables''. But such part by part analysis will never be able to reveal the unit given by the description, ''Chinmoy is presenting a paper on understanding''. The ordering of the constituents in this abstract representation is atemporal and not strictly sequential. Nevertheless, it holds the structure of the unit as a single unit. The observed sequencing of the concrete happening is mediated in and by the abstract representations. Obviously, the constituents themselves may form units of their own. Since the abstract representation does not have an identical sequencing as the physical one, we are able to identify similar (but not identical, slightly different) physical sequencing as the same.

The important point that emerges is that a segment of a sequence may have several interesting descriptions. Different descriptions set out different modes of understanding. Consequently, there is no unified or unqualified THE UNDERSTANDING. Different understandings need not necessarily imply wrong understanding or misunderstanding. There is no reason to assume that a human individual is a passive receptor of the inputs, one who receives an understanding of the expression only from outside. On the contrary, an individual's organs actively receive and gather the expressions and abstract the units at various levels. The individual (her) himself postulates the possibilities of expressiveness depending upon his/her understanding of the situation within the horizon partially outlined by the relevant cultural and subcultural narratives. The cultural narratives provide the individual with the field of expressiveness at the conceptual level and (s)he sees the absract representations. When an individual finds another individual, on an occasion, expressing, the first individual, depending upon his/her understanding of the situation and the possibilities provided by the cultural narratives, constructs the expression possibilities, and thus, is able to identify the unit at the concrete level. Also, an individual while expressing, projects suitable imaginary individuals, who might recognize his/her expressions. The attempt on the part of the individual expressing something to reach out to an other and the attempt of another individual receiving the signal to engulf the other within his/her fold, make them meet. The othering and the selfing of different individuals make (con)fusion possible.

One should recognize that communities and subcommunities do not start from a pure, homogeneous narrative. They explicitly operate with many co-familiar narratives sharing and differing on many crucial norms for actions and interactions. When one fuses one's own narratives with another's, (s)he is welcoming the latter into the *fold*. The process of seeing is an essential feature of understanding. But what do we understand is an expression from an *other*. The very act of naming of an expression is an attempt to reach out to an *other*, a process of *othering*. This complex of *selfing* and *othering* processes is easier to understand and is nearer to actuality, if we conceptualise the *fold*, at least to begin with, as polysystemic potentiality. Human expressions become more substantial and concrete as we bring a multidimensional and stereoscopic vision to bear on them. Thus, the more subcultures a community is familiar with and operate within, the deeper and more substantial are the understandings of the crucial expressions.

> Is my understanding only blindness to lack of my understanding?
> It often seems to me so.[5]

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5

Language and Disclosure of Meaning

Goutam Biswas

I

Certain presuppositions about language and meaning are so deep-rooted in human culture and further corroborated by experience that it is rather difficult to set them aside. One of such presuppositions is that language is essentially human. This is further supported by the established fact that communicative competence of humans in terms of linguistic expressions ranges far beyond the closed system of communication through symbols prevalent among chimpanzees and gorillas. In view of this distinction, the materiality of language receives a special nuance and a different theoretical trajectory by encompassing infinitely diverse segments of society and culture on the one hand, and by involving new and unique specificities that are mostly external, on the other. This concept of materiality of human language surpasses the materiality of symbolic communication of non-human primates, based primarily upon needs of subsistence. In fact, the distinction between 'subsistence' and 'existence' is a human distinction having an important anthropological significance; it adds a value dimension to human communication whereby communication becomes an expression of what is 'surplus' in humans and humans alone beyond the needs of subsistence. This concept of materiality does not deem fit for vindicating the structuralist position of language and meaning in an unalterable and absolute sense, because the source or genesis of meaning and its further disclosure, according to this concept of materiality of language, loses any fixed 'center', or it becomes too wide and evades our grasp. Some pertinent questions ensue from this problematic situation like 'Why speak of materiality of language at all if language of humans transcends all its biological and need-based moorings?' 'Does the perceptibility of language as a socio-cultural institution make it *material*?' 'Is it material simply because it is often talked of as an analogue of some usable instrument?' What is to be noted here is that 'materiality' of language is not an antonym of 'spirituality' of language or any sacrosanct concept of language, particularly in religious spheres of communication. It is material in the sense that it is perceptible, real and an integral component of life, the overpresence of which creates noise and a complete absence of which results in autism; it is a presence *per se*. Even in its suspension that brings 'calm' or 'silence' its absence becomes a virtual presence. One may raise the issue of priority of thought over language or language over thought either temporally or conceptually. But as Michael Dummett has pointed out, the priority issue is 'far from being most urgent'.[1] It is so for the reason that thought and its expression cannot be isolated in most of the cases. As Dummett says, "The theorist is presupposing what it is to have a thought: his account of what it is for us to take a sentence as meaning what it does will serve as his account of what thoughts are".[2]

What is important in our context is to understand the importance and relevance of language-life and language-society equation. The reality of the equation cannot be slurred over in silence as it controls the life of expressions of different sections of people, and helps in sustaining a stratified society to a great extent; it may also emancipate a people in terms of the concept of 'freedom of speech' or 'linguistic right' or 'language right of a minority', and recommending actions/reform/revolution according to the concept. Hence, language-life and/or language-society equation leads to another equation, that is, language-freedom equation. *Speaking to* and *speaking of* the *other* by *another other* may carry contempt or criticism, love and/or hatred, assertion or exchange of any kind. They all alter what a language is in a certain point of time, constrict or extend its purview by disallowing or allowing freedom.

From this standpoint too, the 'materiality' of language becomes synonymous with the 'reality' of language. The meaning of 'language' is, therefore, explicable as a real category of social life,—a category that determines our 'being' in many ways through its own laws of operation or through its structured variations in a social matrix and in the contexts of exchange between subjects. However, these two cannot be segregated from each other because a language's own laws of operation and its structured variations depending upon the specificities involved in a social matrix or context of exchange between subjects affect, corroborate or contest each other. It is a *dialectical* relation depending largely upon the communicating agents and the dialogical space between the subjects; the dialecticality here is not independent of the relational sphere consisting of the participants in the speech situation.

The meaning of 'language' in this context is more in terms of *concrete speech* without which language as a given structure cannot be sustained. From this angle, to consider language as a material/real category of social life does not necessitate an obliteration of phenomenological (in its existential sense) and critical significance of specific linguistic contexts. This approach stands between deterministic view of language and meaning and a completely foundationless view of them, between 'somewhere' and 'nowhere' of it. One of my contentions in this article is that the phenomenology of language need not bypass the *positionality* of language and meaning to stick to its pure Husserlian tradition or ignore the anthropological dimension of humans' *surplus* within themselves that endows them with an unlimited communicative competence, and always tends to take them beyond the positioned perspective of language and meaning. It is true that the *positionality* of a language also signifies an *already interfered face of the language* concerned, and it surely ambiguates the anthropological dimension of the concept of the *surplus* in humans, which would otherwise be accepted in a simplistic manner. The *surplus* contains both *creativity* and *criticality* generating *inter-positionality,* which, in turn, feeds the health of the democratic format of a language in a plural society. It is not a non-evasive, fixed ontological category for explaining creativity and criticality, but is experienced in human thought, actions and dispositions. Another contention of my article is that linguistic hegemony contests inter-positionality of language and meaning and subverts the disclosure of meaning. But a middle path between structuralist position in an absolute sense and contextualism as a final recourse requires some justification.

II

Levi-Strauss's contention that the phenomenon of language, which obviously includes meaning-constructs is largely controlled by a kind of Freudian 'Unconscious' and lived and developed by a collective consciousness of Durkheimian kind, is in accordnace with his structuralist position, but it misses out the contribution of critical and phenomenological consciousness, where *'Unconscious' does not persist as an ontological category, but remains as something 'temporal'*. Levi-Strauss, at two levels, conceives language as a social phenomenon:

> Language is a social phenomenon; and, of all social phenomena, it is the one which manifests to the greatest degree two fundamental characteristics which make it susceptible of scientific study. In the first place, much of linguistic behavior lies on the level of unconscious thought. When we speak, we are not conscious of the syntactic and morphological laws of our own language. Moreover, we are not ordinarily conscious of the phonemes that we employ to convey different meanings; and when we are rarely, if ever conscious of the phonological oppositions which reduce each phoneme to a bundle of distinctive features. This absence of consciousness, moreover, still holds when we do become aware of the grammar or the phonemics of our language. For, while this awareness is the privilege of the scholar, language, as a matter of fact, lives and develops only as a collective construct; and even the scholar's linguistic knowledge always remains dissociated from his experience as a speaking agent, for his mode of speech is not affected by his ability to interpret his language on a higher level.[3]

The idea that the so-called 'unconscious' prevails in both the levels seems to be a little naïve. Firstly, what has been taken as 'unconscious' can be interpreted as 'tacit'. The possibility of 'tacit' becoming 'explicit' does not involve any contradiction. Moreover, the 'tacit awareness' is a result of a long training, which may be at a scholarly or ordinary level. Secondly, it may not always be the case that someone's ability to interpret his or her language on a higher level does not affect his or her speech. Someone's ability to understand his or her own language is essentially combined with some understanding of the semantics of the language that bears a close link with some prevailing belief system(s) and social practices in consonance with or in deviation from the belief systems(s).

Two assertions are important in this respect. First, there is a close link between meaning and belief, and ascription of some belief to the speaker does not necessarily imply that it is a part of the so-called unconscious process; it may be tacit or even explicit. I do not simply attribute a meaning to an utterance but I also attribute a belief to the speaker. So interpretation of any utterance or disclosure of its meaning beyond a simple redescription of what has been said largely depends on belief-meaning nexus. If someone says, 'grasses look beautiful in his garden' then I must also hold that the speaker believes that grass is green. As Davidson says:

> ... behavioral or dispositional facts that can be described in ways that do not assume interpretations, but on which a theory of interpretation can be based, will necessarily be a vector of meaning and belief. One result is that to interpret a particular utterance it is necessary to construct a comprehensive theory for the. interpretations of a potential infinity of utterances. The evidence for the interpretation of a particular utterance will therefore have to be evidence for the interpretation of all utterances of a speaker and community.[4]

Davidson's contribution can be stretched further for my second assertion that the parameters and criteria for interpretation gather intelligibility against the backdrop of a social psychological whole, which I do not consider to be absolutely unalterable in the presence of that *excess* or *surplus* in humans in terms of creative and critical enterprises of humans, – a presence that is also commonly accepted within this whole for such enterprises bear its evidence. Thus, the element of freedom in linguistic practices is not any metaphysical presumption. It is very much experiential in a rather mundane sense. But the force of it needs to be understood in *cases and contexts* for the reason that while *criticality* and *creativity* expand the purview of the *langue* or given structure of language it needs a focus. It is in this sense that I spoke of and for phenomenology of language as a conscious project in which the positionality of language is focused in terms of its specificities, and at the same time it also takes cognizance of the anthropological dimension of the *surplus* in humans as an important dimension of human existence exhibited in communicative competence in men and women beyond any limit and beyond the positioned perspective of language and meaning.

Deviating from the orthodox structuralist approach of Saussure's kind, phenomenology of language seeks to establish the link between speaking subjects and the world in terms of 'living meaning' of words and positionality of subject. As Merleau-Ponty says:

> The link between the word and its living meaning is not an external link of association, the meaning inhabits the word, and language is not an external accompaniment to intellectual process ... Language certainly has an inner content, but this is not self-subsistent and self-conscious thought. What then does language express, if it does not express thoughts? It presents or rather it *is* the subject's taking up of a position in the world of his meanings. The term 'world' here is not a manner of

> speaking: it means that the 'mental' or cultural life borrows its structures from natural life and that the thinking subject must have its basis in the subject incarnate.[5]

Saussure's theory of language is based upon a distinction between language (*La Langue*), that is, a system of interconnected signs and forms and individual speech act (*La Parole*), which is normatively determined by the former. This is recongnized as a main trend in the history of linguistics and Mikhail Bakhtin in his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* the English translation of which was published in 1973, named it *abstract objectivism.* Merleau-Ponty, in one of his later essays on phenomenology of language, made an attempt to shift Saussure's emphasis on *langue* as the chief determining factor in speech formation to the dialectics between *language* and *parole.*

But to have a conscious experience of any speech phenomenon and language as such this dialectic cannot be estranged from the existential purview of humans and given an autonomous status. Hence, language is conceived more in the sense of 'speech'. Thus, language, speech and communication are all interrelated in one network. They are in proximal relation with one another, though conceptually they are not identical. If language is to be understood in the context of the life-world of humans and in a concrete sense, this interrelation has to be accepted. Any explication of any one of these concepts without reference to the other concepts will be inadequate and incomplete. The formulation of M. Bakhtin is relevant in this context. He says:

> Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological and grammatical resources of the language, but above all, through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects – thematic content, style and compositional structure — are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance, and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances.[6]

Bakhtin calls such stable types *speech genres*. The concept of speech genre explicated by Bakhtin in the above manner is moderately balanced between the extremes of objectivism and subjectivism, foundationalism and non-foundationalism, absolute autonomy of language and meaning from culture and society and complete dependence on them. At the same time it retains the contextual and concrete character of language and meaning. From his standpoint, a language without *addressivity* is a language without life, and, therefore, incapable of meaning generation. Meaning generation is possible through hermeneutical exercise, which, again, is possible in the context of addressivity or dialogue. In Bakhtin's words:

> Language as a system has an immense supply of purely linguistic means for expressing formal address: lexical, morphological (the corresponding cases, pronouns, personal forms of verb), and syntactical (various standard phrases and modifications of sentences). But they acquire addressivity only in the whole of a concrete utterance. And the expression of this actual addressivity is never exhausted, of course, by these special language (grammatical) means. They can even be completely lacking, and the utterance can still reflect very clearly the influence of the addressee and his anticipated responsive reaction. The choice of *all* lanaguge means is made by the speaker under varying degrees of influence from the addressee and his anticipated response.[7]

III

The philosophy of language cannot be oblivious of this living nature of language, and a phenomenological treatment of it becomes necessary in the face of an unwarranted emphasis on the 'language means' keeping the pragmatics of the language in periphery. Such a treatment *brackets out* the pragmatics in any speech genre and highlights its hermeneutical possibility and the constraints involved in it. In this process it transgresses the mechanical aspects of the pragmatics in terms of its sheer *use* in a given speech context with reference to convention, tradition and taboos in a *form of life*. In other words, it then reveals the *already interfered face of a language*, and introduces criticality in its understanding. The conventional phenomenological method is re-phrased here. The conventional method consists of a three-step process that is synergistic in nature. I borrow its presentation from Richard Lanigan's "The Phenomenology of Human Communication".[8] Its first step is *phenomenological description* of the object under study in terms of a suspension of its external presuppositions. It also brings an intentional control over one's thinking by valuing the ideal of objectivity. Its second step lies in pinpointing the essentials of the object of study. At this level phenomenological description becomes *phenomenological definition* highlighting the *eidos* of the object. The third step is *interpretation* in terms of the essences of the object discovered at the second level. The disclosure of meaning of the object under scrutiny becomes 'essence oriented'. The process is like that of what Husserl refers to as discovering the beginning of geometry regressively in its most *original sense* but not as a historical or philological fact. In fact, Husserl intended the very meaning of cultural history to be in an altogether different perspective where not the facts, physical or psychological, but the genesis in terms of the essences will be the primary focus. The arrival at the 'ideality' in this regressive process, as Husserl himself admitted, poses the problem of communicating its meaning to establish its intra-subjective validity.[9] I call it 'conventional phenomenological approach' for the sake of brevity, but not for undermining its value. Husserl himself provided a clue for its reversal in a certain sense when he acknowledged the problem of translation of the idealities of geometry at intra-subjective and inter-subjective spheres. The solution that he offered was the one through a regeneration of the 'original' meaning of an 'ideal' object through re-enactment of the experience of the 'pure ideality' and thus incorporating it within the structure of a 'We-horizon'. This proposal is noteworthy in the sense that it regenerates the creation of mathematics, music and in Husserl's words, 'constructions of fine literature' in the commoners' world. But understanding the commoners' world and its linguisticality still remains a problematic. The important point is that the original creations, particularly the creations of literature, are historically founded upon an attempt to rise above the limits of natural language with the mediation of natural language. Also there may be conscious attempts to create new boundaries of specific language or questioning of the boundaries of a linguistic world.

Husserl's contention is a contribution to the history of philosophy, — 'history' not in its factual sense, but in the sense that Husserl explicates. As he says:

> ... a genuine history of philosophy, a genuine history of the particular sciences, is nothing other than the tracing of the historical meaning-structures given in the present, or their self-evidences, along the documented chain of historical back-

references into the hidden dimension of the primal self-evidences which underlie them.[10]

Coming to the question of its limitation so far as the phenomenology of natural language is concerned, the meaning of a sentence cannot be disclosed with so much of purity and at the level of ideality in an exclusive sense for the reason that every speech genre is contextually bound, and communication, speaking across the borders of specific speech genres, makes it even more problematic. That cannot be explained without reference to what I described as 'Surplus' underpinning the pragmatics of a language. Pragmatics can be understood in terms of rules and relationship between grammatical rules and meaning, i.e., systematization of meaning, or in a critical sense. In the context of this article it is the concept of *critical pragmatics* that is more important. It questions and intervenes with the very notions of rules and grammar and develops a project of reconstruction of language by bringing it down to users' modes of intervention. Such interventions form a kind of response to linguistic rules in the matrix of socio-cultural relations. As I have mentioned above, *speaking to* and *speaking of the other by another other* carry attitudinal elements that impair the nature of linguisticality of a speech genre in a point of time. When these attitudinal elements are consciously practiced in linguistic behaviour of a person or a group of persons, say, for example, in the context of assertion of rights by women or Dalits or any marginalized section or creative writing or addressing, critical pragmatics is in operation. It is conceivable in terms of a four-fold phenomenological movement that begins with *(i)* the raw object in the exteriority and then moves through *(ii)* an internalization of the raw object by intentional acts of consciousness, *(iii)* reduction of the intentional act to an inner space of time, i.e., a temporalized space with indications of its sense but without any expression of the sense, and finally, to yield *(iv)* a further interiorization of the temporalized space in consciousness for generation of phenomenological expressions/ interpretations. Critical pragmatics too starts with a speech phenomenon in consonance with a speech genre, and then internalizes the former through the intentional acts of consciousness, and this intentionality is further reduced to an inner space of time for producing inner sense and its expressions. Consequent upon this, the nuances transferred by the particular speech genre in Bakhtinian sense to the speech phenomenon are liable to alteration, review and replacement. It brings change in the language habits of a particular community. Thus, the phenomenological understanding of meaning in Alfred Schutz's sense as "a certain way of directing one's gaze at an item of one's own experience"[11] is also potential to introduce language reform or revolution and expressive of human freedom, i.e., *surplus* in humans.

IV

In a way my position comes in close terms with Charles Taylor's expressivist theory of language that treats language as more than an instrument and significant of a pattern of activity by which we express/realize a way of being in the world, that of reflective awareness. From this standpoint, language enables us to express not merely subjective preferences but the possibilities of the self, the relationship between self and society, and possibilities of social, cultural and political life in general. It renders the inter-positionality of language and meaning possible. Linguistic hegemony operates in several manners to resist this inter-positionality, and derides the value of critical pragmatics. First, it attempts to insulate and thus, brings a closure over a particular speech genre in the name of national or ethnic unity or solidarity of a particular group. Second, it reduces the concept of language as a way of being to a mere instrument for sustaining power of the dominating group or class. One important commitment of expressivist theory is that it transforms and extends the conception of the uses of language. Also, as Taylor contends, it transforms the conception of the subject of language. He says:

> If language must be primarily seen as an activity – it is what is constantly created and recreated in speech then it becomes relevant to note that the primary locus of speech is in conversation. Men speak together, to each other. Language is fashioned and grows not principally in monologue, but in dialogue, or better, in the life of the speech community.[12]

Though the meaning of 'dialogue' is not explicated here with all its ideological nuances as it is so in the contexts of Martin Buber or Mikhail Bakhtin and the depth of dialogue is confined to conversation alone, the observation remains noteworthy for pointing to the existential base of language and meaning to counter and contest any subversive attempt to denigrate its status as a human phenomenon that is fundamentally related to human nature. A plural perception of language, in fact, of the same language in view of dialects, other modifications and the language's potentiality to become more than what it is in a certain point of time through the critical pragmatics and for its own expressive nature that owes to the *surplus* in humans in dialogue is, perhaps, the only way to rescue it from reification of any kind. This includes hermeneutical activity in its philosophical sense.

Disclosure of meaning, unfolding the hermeneutical possibilities (in philosophical sense) of any sentence/utterance/text, is a conscious project. As Hebermas pointed out, "It is not an art but a critique – that is, it brings to consciousness in a reflective attitude experiences which we have of language in the exercise of our communicative competence and thus in the course of social interaction with others through language".[13] What we have so far contended in this paper shows that a philosophical hermeneutics requires a philosophical anthropological commitment and an existential phenomenological corroboration.

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6

Hermeneutics and Social Science: Erklaren *versus* Verstehen

Sharad Deshpande

The traditon of science, at least the one beginning with the Galilean and the Copernican interventions, restricts the meaning of the term 'science' to the science of nature, i.e., 'natural sciences'. This restriction excludes the category of 'purpose' from the so-called scientific explanation. In their gradual evolution natural sciences developed a language in which a scientific account or a scientific explanation could be given without referring to 'will', 'purpose', and 'intention'. This exclusion is itself due to a particular conception of the universe, namely, the universe being a mechanistic and causally determined system. In the historical perspective, the mechanistic conception of the universe was itself due to a revolt against such notions as the 'divine purpose' which, in principle, is capable of depriving natural phenomena of their observed and recorded regularities. In the mechanistic conception of the Universe there is no scope for miracles or anything extraordinary which is suggestive of a conscious, deliberative and intending subject. In this background, the emergence and the development of the social science, i.e., the study of man, as it is documented in the works of J.S. Mill, Augustus Comte and others, took place in the shadow of the 'triumphs' of natural science. As natural sciences possess the explanatory and predictive power, the science of man's behaviour must also possess the same kind of explanatory and predictive power. A social scientist is expected to 'explain' and not merely to 'understand' the human behaviour. Understanding human behaviour in terms of meaning or purpose is to be replaced by the explanation of human behaviour in terms of demonstration of general rules and specific conditions which make the given phenomenon, i.e., a particular human behaviour inevitable. Only with this kind of understanding of human behaviour that social sciences could become compatible with natural sciences. Hermeneutics poses a challenge to this positivistic conception of social science which takes 'understanding' as 'explanation'. Understanding social reality by excluding the categories of meaning and purpose, of design and strategies, of unique configurations of thoughts and feelings is highly problematic. The social reality in form of human action is an observable manifestation of these determinants. To understand a human action, is therefore, to grasp the intention or the meaning which the actor 'invests' into his action. This task is essentially different from that of natural science.

The uniqueness of this task was highlighted by the introduction of a terminological distinction between *Erklaren* (explanation) and *Verstehen* (understanding) by Droysen in his *Grundrisse der Historik* (1858) and by Dilthey in his *Geistewissenschaften* (1883). Besides highlighting the uniqueness of the task, the distinction serves to provide an epistemological foundation for the autonomy claim, and argues for the sui generic status of the historical sciences comprising of various types of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and dialectics. Whereas the phenomena of natural sciences are to be 'explained'; the phenomena of historical human sciences, in terms of, the linguistic meaning or the communicative experience, are to be 'understood'. Historical human sciences are 'individualizing' or 'ideographic'. Linguistic meanings cannot be explained in the same way in which natural events are explained in natural sciences by referring to causal laws.

Introduction (with modification) of the notion of *Verstehen* as the appropriate methodological concept for social or the historical sciences sharply focused the issue, namely, whether or not these sciences had to follow the paradigmatic covering law model of scientific explanation in natural science. Apel describes this phase as the first phase of *Erklaren-Verstehen* controversy. This controversy is marked by the arguments and the counter arguments in connection with the methodological reductionism of the older or the classical scientistic positivism along with the modification of the implicit psychologism in early Dilthey and the adoption of some of the Kantian insights. The second stage of this controversy is marked by the fierce debate over some crucial issues. Can the study of social reality ever rise to the level of precision and exactitude and the same degree of explanatory power which the natural sciences claim to have? As in the case of understanding a work of art, to interpret a human action is to recreate a web of motives and intentions. Understanding a work of art and understanding a human action imply a sort of sympathetic self-identification with another human being. *Verstehen* is thus an art rather than a science. Science as a communal activity demands a consensus of interpretations and the truth of its propositions. In the case of hermeneutic understanding of social reality, even if the consensus is achieved as a result of minimizing or neutralizing personal differences in interpretation of a given social reality, it would not necessarily guarantee the truth of the finally accepted interpretation. In fact, such a consensus would still be temporary, tradition bound, and incapable of meeting the standard of truth. In addition to these difficulties, the insistence of the neo-positivists like Hempel and others to stick to the Deductive-Nomological model of scientific explanation too, puts a question mark on the claims of the *Verstehen* based social sciences. By way of equating *Verstehen* with 'empathy' and thereby isolating the 'irrational' or 'extra-logical' element of *Verstehen*, Hempel argues that *Verstehen* 'does not represent an autonomous method of cognition'. It is at the most a psychologically relevant heuristic means for providing motivational hypothesis, i.e., antecedent conditions in the sense of a volitional cognitive-causal complex which together with law hypothesis would constitute explanans of a causal explanation. In fact, the neo-positivists also offer the reductive premise, i.e., all other methodological procedures, e.g., various types of explanations, can be reduced to causal explanation. On this view, "there is no need for any mysterious intuitive power called verstehen: at the most the theory of verstehen amounts to a heuristic device". *Verstehen*, thus, cannot function as a scientific procedure. Meaning and values—the two categories of the historical reason as suggested by Dilthey "cannot secure intersubjectively valid or verifiable interpretations of linguistic meanings".

As against this rejection of the *Verstehen* based autonomy claim of historical sciences, two sets of reactions, emanating from two seemingly opposite traditions are noteworthy. One set of reactions is from within the non-analytical continental philosophy represented by Marx, Weber, Husserl, Parsons, Heidegger, Schutz and others. By taking 'understanding' as the work either of history, or of reason or of a form of life, these philosophers argued for the methodological claim of *Verstehen*, i.e., that its rules of concensus and its standard of truth are valid enough to attain the required cogency which is comparable to the one, found in natural science. In this paper I have not discussed these reactions. The other set of reactions is from within the analytical tradition including the history of science segment of philosophy of science. One common concern for analytical philosophy and philosophy of science is: Can the teleological explanations be reduced to causal explanations as the proponents of the D-N model of explanation hold? Though the proposal looks attractive it is not free of problems. At a meta-level the issue turns out to be that of understanding the scientific activity, i.e., actions of scientists. How the activities of the scientists are to be accounted for? It is clear that the D-N model is not applicable at this level of inquiry. To trace the law-governed nature and predictability of scientists' actions is misleading. Explanation of scientists' activity needs a non-causal explanation including those given in terms of 'good reasons'. In other words, a why-question pertaining to the history and progress of science itself is to be posed not in terms of general laws. A scientist's imagination and innovation which go into various activities like observation, experimentation, and proposals of new theories that a scientist undertakes cannot be explained in terms of some general laws. Similarly, as Popper has remarked, scientific results cannot be predicted. Lakatos' idea of 'empirically and normatively relevant reconstruction of the internal history of science' is significant. Lokatos himself carries out this reconstruction in such terms as 'good' and 'bad' reasons.

The third stage of the *Erklaren-Verstehen* controversy, according to Apel, is constitutive of all such reactions to the reductionist approach and strategies whether in the area of philosophy of science or philosophy of action or philosophy of language. The interventions of the neo-Wittgensteinians and the ordinary language philosophers are significant in this context. However, these interventions were not primarily meant to defend the autonomy claim of hermeneutic understanding *per se*. In order to meet the anti-psychologistic standards of explications, these interventions introduced alternative models of explanation, i.e., alternative to the hegemonic D-N model of explanation. These models of explanation are best known as 'rational explanations' or 'teleological explanations'.

Hermeneutic understanding *vis-à-vis* human action presupposes certain crucial distinctions between 'effective reasons' (as the D-N modelist would insist) and 'merely intelligible good reasons'. This distinction is further crucial to the distinction between 'explanation of action as event' and 'rationalization'. How to define the notion of 'effective reason' setting aside the reference to general or quasi-general laws is an issue at the center of the causalist and the non-causalist approaches to understand human action.

The two terms, i.e., *Erklaren* and *Verstehen* are often used interchangeably in the context of human action. A why-question pertaining to human action does include in the loose sense of the term both these notions, i.e., explanation and understanding. The question 'why' may mean 'from what motive?' or 'for what reason?' But it may also mean, in a trivial sense, 'from what cause?' This makes us treat motives and reasons as causes. It is in this trivial sense, a why-question pertaining to human action admits an application of the nomic cause to the notion of human action. But in the non-trivial sense, a why-question pertaining to human action becomes problematic. In order to get at the problematic involved it is necessary to have some clarification of these two terms which are central to the discourse on action-explanation in particular and the issue of *verstehen* in general.

Why do we ask questions about actions? This is a meta-question involving hermeneutic approach towards the understanding of human action. We ask, e.g. why this or that action was done? It is true that in asking this question no 'scientific interest', i.e., the one that is involved in the proceedings of natural science is involved. But as von Wright points out, action explanations are not species of scientific explanations. In raising the question 'why this or that action was done?, one wants to evaluate the action or its agent. 'Was the action necessary to perform'? 'Was it a good or reasonable action'? 'Was the agent responsible for that action'? 'Does he deserve blame or praise for that action'? 'How does the action reflect on his character'? 'What can we expect of this agent in furture'? 'Will we do the same thing which he did once we know the reasons behind that action'? These are the kinds of question that we raise in relation to human action. They reflect our practical interests. These interests and the questions arising out of them are practical questions. The important methodological concept in this context is that of reason. The concept of reason is highly complex and is contrasted with opinion, faith, passion, sense experience and such other terms. But this contrast is valid only in epistemology. In the domain of art and aesthetic activity reason is distinguished from emotions, and feelings. But how does the concept of reason operate in the domain of human action? von Wright answers this question in terms of the notion of variety of reasons. He further contends that the variety of reasons is due to types of actions. His distinction roughly corresponds to the Kantian distinction between the categorical and hypothetical norms and the actions based on them. Given these distinctions it follows we cannot answer why-questions pertaining to human action in a straightforward sense. The limitations posed by the variety of reasons and mixed motives are significant. Despite complexity of reasons and motives we understand actions in their motivational setting. We do understand actions; they do not remain 'incomprehensible' or 'inexplicable'. As von Wright notes, "If we could not on the whole account in terms of reasons for what people do it would be difficult for us to understand them *qua* agents. If this were the case with ourselves, we should cease to feel ourselves responsible for our actions, since we could not on the whole account for them. We should perhaps think that we are at the mercy of uncontrollable outer or inner forces – may be of causal nature". Understanding is thus relative to agents, i.e., agents whose actions spring from reasons and motives.

7

Language, Language-Understanding and Communication

From the Chomskian Perspective

Kumar Mitra

I. Language

Language often stands as an identity of an individual. It is as broad and deep as the whole fabric of human existence. Through language we try to understand and to interpret the world around us. A new sentence may often present a new dimension of reality.

It is a matter of common observation that from a very limited, unorganized, linguistic data a human baby picks up the knowledge of its mother-tongue. If we ask 'how'?, the matter of common observation truns into an object of wonder. The available linguistic information is limited, but our cognitive systems are immensely rich. Chomsky terms this 'Plato's Problem', or sometimes 'the problem of poverty of the stimulus'.[1] Unless we assume a sort of 'language-faculty' which is species-specifically present in all human beings, the problem of 'know'-ing the vast complexity of the mechanism of language from a very limited linguistic data remains unexplained.

So, Chomsky takes the 'language faculty' to be a particular component of the human mind. It is the spring-board of our control over any language. The characteristics of this faculty may be examined under a broad theory of linguistic structure which tries to bring out a system of principles and elements universally present in all human languages.

We are taking the position that language is essentially human. As Chomsky writes:

> ... all normal humans acquire language, whereas acquisition of even its barest rudiments is quite beyond the capacities of an otherwise intelligent ape ...[2]

Languages may be natural or artifical. Artifical (or formal, or ideal) languages (like language of mathematics, language of logic, etc.) are those which have a clearly interpreted formal system for some specific function to perform. The structures in artifical languages are strictly specified by rules; the meanings of the elements of their vocabulary are specified too. To learn these languages, we are to learn these rules and meanings with conscious effort. All the artificial languages have a definite system just because they have a definite history of their origin. In contrast, the origin of all the natural languages is shrouded in mystery. The expressions of natural languages are often ambiguous and vague. And in case of every natural language, the most striking feature is that there are at least some individuals who, being born in a particular linguistic community, learn that language without any conscious effort.

Chomsky considers a language,

> ... to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.[3]

This definition, as Chomsky observes,

> ... includes both natural languages and the artificial languages of logic and of computer-programming theory.[4]

Though the aforesaid definition covers both natural and artificial languages, we are here concerned with natural languages alone.

Other forms of non-human life have means of communication, and we, the human beings, also communicate. But language is something more than any other means of communication in being creative; and, in being creative, language is a unique possession of human beings.

Language is a creative event in at least three senses:

(i) Every language has a finite number of elements or materials, but has an infinite output. Though constructed out of finite elements, sentences vary in having different sorts of complexity. Thus, every language shares the property of unboundedness.[5] For every sentence in every human

language, a longer sentence can be formed by recursion of syntactic constituents within the same sentence. Recursion is common in all languages known. With a smaller number of rules and syntactic categories, an infinite set of sentences can be generated. Recursive rules are indefinitely re-applicable in syntax.

Though these rules give a speaker an access to infinitely many sentences, no speaker utters or hears infinite number of sentences in a finite life-time, nor is any sentence of infinite length, although, there is no upper limit of sentence-length. Nevertheless, the ability to produce longer and longer sentences allows them to be more and more varied, and hence, as descriptive and creative as the speaker wishes. As no limit can be imposed on the length of any sentence, no limit can be imposed on the number of possible sentences either. Hence, we may say that our language is 'open-ended'.

(ii) Language expresses creativity in not being exclusively bound by situational stimuli. Human utterances do not always strictly adhere to the command of spatio-temporal situations.

(iii) Creativity in language manifests itself in maintaining internal cohesion or relevance. We can distinguish normal use of language from incoherent mutterings of drunk or mad people. Chomsky refers to this aspect of creativity as 'appropriateness to the situations'.[6]

According to Chomsky, creativity is infinite, but it has limits. That is why D'Agostino calls the Chomskian account of creativity 'limitationist'.[7] The limit on creativity originates, according to Chomsky, from some innately-based species-specific system.[8]

II. Understanding Language

Now, the question is: How do we produce and understand hitherto unproduced or unheard sentences?

In language we recognize words and group those words into phrases and sentences. However, neither word-recognition nor the computation of syntactic structure is the goal of our language-understanding-system. Syntax is not meaning, and to compute syntactic structure is not to understand. The goal of our language-understanding-system is to construct a mental representation of the information that is conveyed by a sequence of sentences. It has to work out the meaning of what is seen or heard. To understand a sentence it is, therefore, necessary to compute meaning from structural relations or syntax.

Noam Chomsky provided the transformational framework for syntactic descriptions. The transformational grammar, in his Standard Theory,[9] had a component that assigned semantic interpretations to the sentences generated by its syntactic rules. On this view, these semantic interpretations correspond to the mental representations of (i.e., the semantic contents of) sentences.

A semantic theory is expected to specify how the truth-conditional part of the meaning of a sentence depends on the meanings of its parts and on the structural relations between them; in other words, a semantic theory should explain how mental representations of word-meanings are put together to produce sentence-representations. But the Standard Theory failed to show very clearly how the representations should be combined.

To solve the problem Katz and Fodor proposed that the meanings of sentences are assembled by a set of projection rules that combine sets of features. Along with these projection rules, Katz and Fodor assumed some selectional restrictions. Chomsky argued that the underlying or deep-structure part of a sentence is semantically interpreted, though later he favoured a different kind of semantic theory[10] that interprets slightly elaborated surface-structures.

A more rigorous and more specified set of rules for semantic interpretations is found in Model-theoretic semantics. This model defines the set of situations that a sentence can correctly describe. However, this model too fails to portray a language-understanding-system that can produce a representation of the particular situation described in a sentence.

Apart from syntactic and semantic cues, perhaps some additional requirements may be brought in to produce a fuller interpretation. This additional information includes both *(a)* pragmatic knowledge about sentences and *(b)* knowledge about the world.

(a) Pragmatic Knowledge about Sentences

Pragmatic knowledge about sentences includes knowledge of those linguistic devices that establish links among words and sentences. One such link is conjunction. Some others, like co-reference, substitution, ellipsis and lexical cohesion, are usually grouped together under the head of anaphora.

Most anaphoric expressions (e.g., definite pronouns like *he, she, they, it*/indefinite pronouns like *one*/elliptical verb phrases/some definite noun phrases), if considered in isolation, have little or no semantic content. An anaphor takes its meaning from the context which comprises some other sentences previously used. Identity-of-reference anaphors (e.g., definite pronouns) refer to the same person or thing previously mentioned. Identity-of-sense anaphors (e.g., indefinite pronouns) refer to a different example of the same kind of thing previously mentioned. So, to resolve an anaphor we are to know what kind of thing the anaphor can refer to (i.e., we are to know that pronouns refer to individuals, elliptical verb phrases to predicates and so on).

(b) Knowledge about the World

To establish links among sentences, we are to know the context which determines the interpretation of expressions. What is more, knowledge of specific facts or knowledge about how things usually happen allows a hearer or reader to elaborate what is stated. Context is composed of a set of relations among the expressions used (relations like temporal, spatial, logical, intentional, causal, moral, etc.).[11] What is more, to understand a set of sentences, we are to determine what meanings a speaker/writer is trying to convey. As Austin[12] has shown, the effects that a speaker intends to produce in a speech situation may be those that depend on general conventions ('illocutionary' effects) and those that do not ('perlocutionary' effects). We are only to recognize that no adequate account of how and when these contextual relations are computed is yet available. We can only hope that through the researches (on understanding of natural languages) that are going on under the heading of cognitive science, the sub-headings of which are the disciplines like psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics and logic, we shall find new horizons opened for our understanding of language-understanding.

III. Communication

Chomsky is not denying that language is a social product.[13] He distinguishes between linguistic competence and linguistic performance, and stresses on the former. According to him, linguistic competence is the innate knowledge of the speaker/hearer regarding language;[14] this competence enables the speaker/hearer to utter/understand indefinite number of novel sentences. Linguistic performance is, on the other hand, actual use of language in a certain spatio-temporal context..

The need is now being felt to expand the Chomskian mode of analysis to linguistic performance as well. When we communicate through language, or, in other words, when we perform a linguistic act, it is not enough that we have innate linguistic competence; we are to know our socio-cultural traits. Through competence a speaker may 'know' (even if, and usually so, not consciously) the abstract principles and parametric variations underlying his/her language, but that is not enough to guide the speaker's linguistic action in specific situations. A child is to learn that speech involves some such rules which are beyond 'grammar' but determined by his/her culture. Unless and until that learning is acquired communication will not be possible in a proper manner. It is not enough to speak grammatically correct sentences; we are to learn which sentence is to be spoken where, when and to whom. As Gumperz writes,

> Whereas linguistic competence covers the speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences; communicative competence describes his ability to select from the totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him, forms which appropriately reflect the social norms governing behaviours in specific encounters.[15]

Broadly speaking, "communication" may be split into three constituents: *(a)* speech/communicative situation, *(b)* speech/communicative event, and *(c)* speech/communicative act.

(a) *Communicative situation* is a state where some sort of communication is bound to take place; for example, a state when the teacher is teaching in a class, an orator speaking to the audience, a prayer is being held in a temple/*musjid*/church, etc. In such situations, not only does the speaker communicate with others, but the hearers also communicate among themselves through whispers or through gestures, or even through silence.

(b) When the teacher is asking some questions to a student, a *communicative event* takes place. Such events are governed by the norms of speech. It is possible that in one communicative event a single speech-act in performed, but usually a set of speech-acts is there in a communicative event.[16] To greet someone, to ask a question, etc., are instances of communicative event. Hymes has shown that a communicative event includes sixteen conditions or sub-components: (1) message form, (2) message content, (3) setting, (4) scene, (5) speaker or sender, (6) addressor, (7) hearer/receiver/audience, (8) addressee, (9) purpose-outcomes, (10) purpose-goals, (11) key, (12) channel, (13) forms of speech, (14) norms of interaction, (15) norms of interpretation and (16) genre. Later, he subsumed these sixteen components under eight heads and expressed those

components through the acronym 'SPEAKING' (where 'S' stands for the aforesaid (3) and (4), i.e., setting and scene, 'P' stands for 'Participants' appearing under (5), (6), (7) and (8), 'E' stands for 'Ends' referring to (9) and (10), 'A' for 'Act Sequences' referring to (1) and (2), 'K' for ''Key'' referring to (11), 'I' stands for 'Instrumentalities' mentioned in (12), 'N' referring to norms under (14) and (15) and 'G' refers to (16).

A communicative event ends when the topic of discussion and the role-relationship of the main participants change; if such changes do not occur, the termination of the event is determined by silence or by change in physical position.[17]

(c) A *communicative act* may be verbal or non-verbal. For a single act, different speech-expressions may occur, for example, the same act may be performed by saying, 'Give me the book', 'Will you please give me the book?', etc. Or, I may mean the same thing non-verbally also, that is, through gestures, or even through a silent gaze.

What I would like to stress here is the point that the Chomskian concept of 'competence' needs some sort of extension. Competence may be biologically programmed, but only through competence successful communication does not take place. In other words, the concept of 'communicative competence' includes the concept of 'competence' and something more; for successful communication it is not enough to learn the 'grammar' and the 'lexicon' of a particular language, the 'cultural grammar' is also to be learnt with care.

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8

Gadamerian Hermeneutics: Between Strangers and Friends

Kanchana Mahadevan

"Everything that is alive nourishes itself on what is alien to it".
Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 223

Hans-Georg Gadamer propounds hermeneutics as an alternative to the hegemony of scientism/technology. With its emphasis on method that can ascertain objectivity, scientism overlooks the role of interpretation in facts. Gadamer does not take the cultural turn as an antidote to scientism. He believes that the proliferation of cultures, traditions and world-views makes the privileging of any one of them suspect. Hence, for Gadamer, hermeneutics is not a method, but an ontological condition; subsequently, the text and the interpreter are located within multiple and overlapping histories.

Gadamer's hermeneutics has been received in opposite ways by Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas. Rorty approvingly cites Gadamer's hermeneutics as an instance of edification that consists in cultural conversation permitted by the openness of Western tradition. Edifying philosophy replaces the pursuit of truth as foundational with that of continuing cultural practices of reading and discussion that have been handed down. In contrast, Habermas disapproves Gadamer's alleged defense of tradition as an uncritical espousal of domination.

However, Rorty's valorization and Habermas' denunciation of Gadamer's relation to tradition needs to be examined. The question remains as to whether his philosophical hermeneutics is just a continuation of the interpreter's tradition. One cannot really answer this question in the affirmative because of the centrality of language in Gadamer's philosophy. According to Gadamer, all hermeneutics is a dialogue of interpretation where two diverse frameworks, that of the interpreter and the text meet, disagree, agree, leading to something new. The text is an other, the alien or the foreign element in dialogue. According to Gadamer, interpretation operates within the effective history of encountering distance. The interpreter comes into contact with the text as other; for the text is situated in another epoch or culture from that of the interpreter. Both inhabit horizons that are open-ended and fluid. Consequently, the confrontation between the interpreter and the text's alien dimension sets off a process of understanding as a tension and fusion of horizons. The assumptions with which the text and interpreter start go through a process of change. Interpretation is, therefore, an intersubjective, complex, creative and fallible process like art. Gadamer's philosophy is promising from the point of view of fusing the horizons of say modernity with tradition, especially in feminist contexts. However, his advances towards a fluid and indeterminate tradition are stymied because he construes friendship as the paradigm of dialogue. This poses problems from the gendered perspective towards tradition.

This paper is an attempt to explore the implications of Gadamer's hermeneutics for a reflective and democratic approach to tradition. In this endeavor, the first part of the paper examines the thesis that his hermeneutics affirms an uncritical affiliation to tradition. As Georgia Warnke remarks: this thesis underlies both Rorty's celebration of Gadamer's edifying philosophy and Habermas' indictment of its unreflective attitude to tradition. The paper argues that this thesis cannot be sustained considering that Gadamer treats understanding and interpretation as a creative process for which cultural belonging is hardly unproblematic. Instead, he maintains that the understanding and interpretation of a tradition also contribute to its production. Gadamer's view that tradition is not a ready-made given is especially significant from the feminist point of view. The second part of the paper illustrates these Gadamerian themes with reference to the historian Romila Thaper's account of the Indian literary work *Śakuntalā*, whose many versions have been produced through a dialogue with the past. As Thaper observes, the specific *Śakuntalā* that is appropriated from the past depends upon contemporary concerns of gender. In its final part, this paper examines the problem of ethnocentrism that lurks in Gadamer's hermeneutics. It argues that his parochialism is not the outcome of an avowed unflinching allegiance to tradition, as Rorty and Habermas maintain. Instead, it is because Gadamer construes friendship as the paradigm of dialogue that he implicitly subscribes to ethnocentrism. The latter is especially troubling from the feminist point of view. To conclude, it is only by moving beyond friendship towards a conversation with strangers that dialogue can accommodate feminist concerns consistently.

I. Is Gadamer Ethnocentric?

Rorty distinguishes between systematic and edifying philosophy (1979, 365) by demarcating three phases in the history of philosophy. "This picture of ancient and medieval philosophy as concerned with things, the philosophy of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries with ideas, and the enlightened contemporary philosophical scene with words has considerable plausibility" (263). In the ancient times, systematic philosophy adopted the metaphysical stance of postulating an original unity of reality, while its modern epistemological avatar privileged the knowledge paradigm. Yet, whether the ultimate refers to a metaphysical reality or to an observation statement, systematic philosophy is open to the skeptical challenge. In contrast, Rorty identifies a third phase in philosophy called the linguistic turn that has brought the hermeneutic perspective of conversation into relief. Instead of treating philosophy in a traditional way as offering arguments for ultimate truths, such an approach edifies or discourses abnormally, as poetry does, proliferating points of view. According to Rorty, the only dangers facing edifying philosophers are those of scarcity of food and secret police. However, as long there are libraries in the world, human beings can escape becoming objects of scientific inquiry. Thus, for Rorty "... free and leisured conversation generates abnormal discourse as the sparks fly forward" (389). Rorty situates Gadamer on the edification side of the philosophical fence.

At a cursory level Rorty and Gadamer have much in common.[1] Both discredit the correspondence model that attempts to mirror an ultimate reality and the modern epistemological project of justification (Warnke, 150). Gadamer's hermeneutics is a response to the methodological impasse of modern philosophy. His hermeneutics, like Rorty's edification, centres on language and conversation. Finally, understanding (*Verstehen*) for Gadamer is linked to practice, like Rorty's practical wisdom (Gadamer 1975, 231-74). In his view, understanding, interpretation and application go to make up one unified process.[2] According to Gadamer, understanding requires and depends upon interpretation, whereas interpretation is an explicit form of understanding.[3] While understanding and interpreting, the text is always applied to the present situation.

However, despite these similarities it is worth interrogating whether Gadamer's hermeneutics advocates cultural affiliation like

Rorty's. Rorty declares that his approach is "frankly ethnocentric" in being located within the canon of Western philosophy (Warnke, 153). He acknowledges that "The *only point on which I would insist* is that philosophers' moral concern should be with *continuing the conversation of the West*, rather than with insisting upon a place for the traditional problems of modern philosophy within that conversation" (Rorty 1979, 394). Thus, in Rorty's view, human beings are enclosed in specific cultural conversations, which cannot be disavowed. Since his edification is inspired by Gadamerian hermeneutics, Rorty extends this view to Gadamer as well. It is precisely from this point of view that Habermas reprimands Gadamer for neglecting the power and domination at work in any tradition. According to Habermas, Gadamer's patriotism towards tradition does not allow for a reflective relation to it (1988, 169-70). He argues that in order to criticize tradition one needs to adopt a perspective "that transcends the context of tradition as such". Gadamer's perspective for Habermas is entrenched in tradition and does not permit critique.[4]

Rorty's endorsement of cultural belonging and conversation that is bereft of all reflective power is problematic. Habermas is certainly right in his suspicion towards a sense of uncritical cultural belonging. As Warnke observes, one cannot erase the closures of foundational philosophy by holding forth the mantel of cultural canons (154). If foundational philosophy is dogmatic, cultural practices can also be equally dogmatic. Indeed, the most contentious question in every culture pertains to what constitutes a cultural tradition. For instance, the mainstream notion of Indian culture espouses a domesticated view of Indian womanhood as a docile, acquiescing, nurturing and adjusting wife. This image is a part of high literary texts such as Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā,* as well as, popular media. However, in India, such an image of a compliant housekeeper has often been deployed to justify women's exploitation within the family and outside it. But this is not just an Indian problem. Rorty justifies Western tradition by saying that it encourages openness and so forth (1989, 44-69). This is contentious, since even with respect to the philosophical tradition of the West, women have been excluded, as the deconstructive critiques of Luce Irigaray reveal.[5] With respect to Western tradition, Irigaray observes that the predominant image of the woman is someone who preserves her home. Considering that any tradition whether Indian or Western is characterized by exclusions, loyalty to a tradition is not self-explanatory, nor does it offer any justification on behalf of that tradition: On the contrary, one needs to interrogate the very idea of tradition, and question an unflinching allegiance to the same. But this is precisely what Gadamer does, although neither Rorty nor Habermas acknowledges it.

Gadamer's Attitude to Tradition

Gadamer's hermeneutics neither upholds the standpoint of belonging to tradition as the final word, nor does it subscribe to a fixed notion of Western tradition as inherently open. In fact, the aspect of otherness or being alien plays an important role in his hermeneutic philosophy. Though Gadamer also construes tradition as the interpreter's or the text's sense of belonging to a network of practices and beliefs that are already there, it is analogous to that of linguistic belonging (Gadamer 1975, 321-325).[6] "For tradition is a genuine partner in communication, *with which we have fellowship as does the 'I' with a 'Thou'*" (1975, 321).[7] In fact, according to Gadamer, tradition is not accessible except through the mediation of language. The world itself is experienced through the horizon of language, so that it can never become an object of knowledge, but will remain the precondition of objectivity. It is on the basis of linguistically constituted experience that Gadamer articulates belongingness to tradition. Thus, there is a unity between language and tradition.[8] Tradition does not have the immediate character of say plastic art. Linguistic tradition is literally handed down, repetition, myth, legend, custom, but such mediation is not a defect, for language allows for openness.[9]

Thus, openness is not so much a feature of the German tradition, but emerges from the dialogical character of language. "... language has its true being only in conversation, in the exercise of understanding between people" (1975, 404).[10] Since language and the world are co-constituted, all those who speak are united by the world. The world is "trodden by none and recognized by all ..." (404). Gadamer maintains that all forms of human community are forms of linguistic community. Hence, precisely because of its linguistic constitution, any specific cultural world or traditional world is always open to other worlds: it expands, modifies and even critiques itself through this openness to what is outside. According to Gadamer, openness is not obedience—rather it is the spirit of accepting perspectives that go against the speaker/interpreter without being forced to do so. Openness acknowledges that every claim contains a counter-claim. Instead of certainty, there is the recognition of ambiguity and fallibilism in the self and the other. According to Gadamer, this in turn gives space for change. He explicitly maintains that questions and answers are a part of dialogue. The interpreter approaches the text with a question, rather than any ready-made ideas. Understanding is structured like language, wherein both are simultaneous. Conversation does not depend upon the will of either individual, but rather happens to them. Hence, in moving beyond subjectivist and methodological models of hermeneutics, conversation shows that the problems of language are the problems of interpretation. Thus, for Gadamer, language is the "universal medium" in which understanding is realized. Conversation requires a common language that is oriented towards agreement.

Understanding a tradition is a form of dialogue between what is familiar and contemporary, what is the strange and the past. Tradition "... is language i.e. expresses itself like a Thou" (Gadamer 1975, 321). It is a genuine partner in communication with which the interpreter has an I/Thou relationship. But neither of them adapt to the other. Linguistic communication enables openness to the Thou/other/alien. This is because language is not a possession; it is not an instrument of self-expression or a successful assertion of one's own point of view. Rather, it is a transformation into a communion of two separate persons who do not remain the same. The other could be tradition itself, another person, a text or a monument—whatever be the other, it is through dialogue with it that tradition is made. There is instead a play which consists in the vicissitudes of risking assertions, inviting objections, taking back what is said, defending one's claims, modifying them ... all of which contribute to understanding. These uncertainties and indeterminacy of dialogue find their way into tradition as well (Habermas 1988, 149-50).[11] In fact, it is its lack of precision that motivates communication with tradition. Ambivalence gives rise to conflicts and discontinuities, whereby hermeneutic understanding is able to get started. There is a distance and a break in communication, which has to be resolved through dialogue. If the past were continuously and seamlessly transmitting information to an already given community, dialogue would not be necessary. According to Gadamer, since linguistic experience of the world is living, it allows for all sorts of variegated experiences, without any exclusiveness of perspectives (1975, 403-7). Thus, there is, what Habermas terms as a dialectic or "crucial balance between mute union and mute isolation, between the sacrifice of individuality and the isolation of the solitary individual" (Habermas 1988, 150) in the dialogue with tradition.

Gadamer remarks that "the reasonable hermeneutic assumption on which to proceed is that we are dealing with a discussion. And we do not conduct our discussions mere geometrico'' (1980, 5). Habermas extends this point by contrasting the dialogue model with ideal language. The latter restricts language to strict derivative conclusions that are not debated or discussed (Habermas 1988, 149). Such deductions permit the transmission of information without any interrogation and thus, tend to be dogmatic.[12] In contrast, dialogue makes room for struggle and reciprocal recognition, since every claim carries the possibility of a counter-claim. Only languages that are free of dialogue can be well-ordered. The very structure of dialogue as ambivalent allows for construing tradition as indeterminate. The conversation with tradition is always unfinished, so that instead of determinate meanings, the interpreter attempts to establish an agreement with tradition.

The interpreter does not command tradition or impose arbitrary or random meanings on the past, nor does the interpreter discover or receive the author's meaning or the historical context from the text (Gadamer 1975, 321-22).[13] According to Gadamer, each of these approaches to interpretation is one-sided and methodological.[14] Command and receptivity assume that meaning can be neatly imposed on or discovered in the text.[15] Gadamer's critics, who argue that he neglects the aspect of domination and power that could be a part of interpretation, neglect this insight in his philosophy. Positivism and scientism illustrate that method goes hand in hand with uninterpreted data. Moreover, they make the subject who uses the method as its foundation. Against this, Gadamer maintains that all facets of human life require interpretation; hermeneutics is an ontological condition of dialogue with the world.[16] There is no given meaning in the text—it is the outcome of the dialogue between the interpreter (who inhabits a historical situation) and the text (which, in turn, has its historical situation). In this process, understanding gives rise to a new way of looking at the text—an unfamiliar way of treating the familiar. The interpreter is located in a particular historical situation, namely that of the present, while the text is located in past history. Tradition is made in the interface between the two—here there is selection, highlighting and critique in the course of interpretation. Interpretation is a process of dialogue where there is the making explicit of what has been hidden in the text or the interpreter. In making aspects of the text explicit it is also applied to the present situation. This making explicit in interpretation and application enables understanding of a new meaning that is shared by the text and the interpreter. Thus, meaning belongs neither to the interpreter nor to the text.

Gadamer identifies two dimensions of historicality (231):

(*a*) That of the interpreter's own historical situation in relation to the text. The degree to which the interpreter is well versed in the text, sees connections, draws conclusions can all be summarized as the matter at hand with the interpreter.

(*b*) The text's own historical situation that includes its various translations and cultural transformations. The interpretations accrued by the text in previous epochs affect the interpreter unconsciously. As Habermas says, "The meaning is an aggregate of the meanings that are continuously sedimented as the result of new retrospective viewpoints" (1988, 155). It is in this sense that texts handed down by tradition are inexhaustible,[17] and also allow for their new aspects to be brought out.[18]

All of the above go to show that meaning is a possibility that cannot be created in a vacuum. The interpreter is Heidegger's *Dasein*—a being-there or a person who is directed towards the world, rather than a Cartesian subject.[19] The meaning that is projected on the text is a kind of questioning of, as well as, openness to it. Thus, there is what Heidegger calls a hermeneutic circle: the meaning that is anticipated in the text by the interpreter is not subjective but is a result of a common bond that binds the interpreter and text to tradition. In this play between the text and the interpreter, "The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (238). Habermas extends this as, "It leads to new processes of development within the horizon of developmental processes that have already taken place. It is a new piece of socialization linked to socialization that has already been undergone—by appropriating tradition, it continues it" (1988, 153).

But this appropriation and recreation of tradition is possible because of the structural transcendence of the interpreter's own and the text's epoch in what Gadamer terms as 'fusion of horizons'. (Gadamer 1975, 269-73). The interpreter and text both inhabit horizons—the horizon is an open-ended framework that allows both the interpreter and the text to open themselves to each other and move beyond the limitations of their culture or epoch.[20] The horizon represents a wide range of possibilities available to any finite standpoint; to have a horizon is to go beyond what is at close quarters.[21] Any horizon allows for crossing the distance with the other.[22] Since there are no closed or static horizons, it makes it possible for both the interpreter and the text to enter a historical situation. The interpreter places himself/herself within a situation,[23] and in doing so also considers the text and its own situation. For, in demarcating his/her own situation, the interpreter has to necessarily imagine the other's situation.[24] This is not just empathy of one individual for another, it is also not the application of the interpreter's own criteria upon another. Rather, it is the attainment of higher universality that overcomes, not only one's own particularity but also that of the other. One looks away from what is close and near to see that which is far in a better way within the larger whole.[25] Thus, what emerges is neither the interpreter's nor the text's epoch but something higher — a shared perspective.

It is precisely due to the fusion of horizons that are diverse, every time the process of dialogical understanding gets initiated, the content may be the same and yet it is appropriated differently. "Every assimilation of tradition is historically different: which does not mean that every one represents only an imperfect understanding of it" (430). This is because of the linguistic character of interpretation. There is no original meaning in the text or the interpreter. Assimilation of a text from tradition is not a mere repetition of the text, but a new creation. Hence, every assimilation of tradition is historically different; there can never be a perfect understanding of tradition. Moreover, he believes that since each historical epoch differs, the movement of understanding will have different results each time it is applied.

In Gadamer's view, understanding necessarily requires an interaction between what is one's own and what is another's—the familiar and the strange or the alien. The very structure of conversation is founded on the foreign or the other. The subject has to beyond herself to reach out to an other while speaking or writing. In return, the other has to respond. For instance, it is because tradition itself has the foreign, the other aspect to it, which is not known, which is not obvious immediately, that an intersubjective communication with it becomes necessary. This is why Gadamer believes that any text or work of art has to be judged by going beyond its present. Its judgement, according to him, is "desperately uncertain" (265). It is only when the work's relation to the present fades away that what is hidden in it will appear out in the open.[26] If the network of communication between the interpreter and the past were transparent, familiar and perfect, if the interpreter already knew that tradition has openness and tolerance as Rorty assumes, interpretation would be unnecessary. Tradition is not a ready-made given, but is created through a dialogical encounter with texts, monuments and events from the past. The fusion of horizons is a play between the movement of the tradition and the interpreter.[27] The basic problem with Rorty is that he does not acknowledge this aspect of the foreign—the distant—that is both vertical and horizontal. The discontinuity of intersubjectivity makes the finding of common ground through interpretation an ongoing task (Habermas 1988, 166).

II. Interpreting *Śakuntalā*

The feminist reception of Gadamer stresses on the significance of the other or the alien aspect in his hermeneutic dialogue.[28] This part of the paper illustrates how his notion of language can bring hidden aspects of gender into the open in a dialogue with tradition. Romila Thaper's account of the various translations of *Śakuntalā* illustrates Gadamer's thesis that ''The making of a tradition is a dialogue with the past'' (Thaper 1999, 4). She continues, ''A single item can therefore have multiple identities which change at historical moments'' (2000, 5). Through its literary versions, *Śakuntalā* divulges the attitudes towards gender prevalent in the precolonial, colonial and post-independent moments of Indian history. Thaper's basic motivation is to show that the cultural literary work such as Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* is not without its ideological notion of perfect womanhood, namely, that of a congenial and patient housekeeper. This notion is evoked and contested in subsequent receptions. The various rewritings of *Śakuntalā* are fusions of horizons; the past and the present meet to give rise to something new that was not there before. Moreover, Thaper also shows that history conceals an assertive Śakuntalā from the epic *Mahābhārata.* In the twenty-first century, when gender has become an issue in India, one needs to pay heed to the many readings of *Śakuntalā.* As Thaper observes, these readings show that literary tradition is not an intact package that is handed down from one generation to another. On the contrary, ''*Innovation* is what gives it (tradition) vitality'' (2000, 4),[29] and one might add an identity that is offset by a dialogue with the past.

Thaper brings out the various innovations that result from the dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity in the narratives of *Śakuntalā.*[30] The latter include a folk poem (*kāvya*) in the epic *Mahābhārata,* a play by Kālidāsa, a prose poem in *Braja-bhāṣā.*[31] Moreover, there have been innumerable translations of *Śakuntalā* during the Mughal and British periods, as well as, a commentary by Rabindranath Tagore. *Śakuntalā* has also been visually depicted.[32] In post-independent India, allusions to *Śakuntalā* abound in film and television. Although there is a family resemblance binding the diverse versions of *Śakuntalā,* they vary to reflect changing perceptions of gender in history. The narrative is broadly speaking about the marriage between a king, Duṣyanta and a forest girl, Śakuntalā. After their separation, Śakuntalā struggles for Duṣyanta's recognition of their child Bharata, as well as, herself. This happens eventually. However, the portrayal of Śakuntalā, the nature of their relationship, as well as, Śakuntalā's endeavor to be recognized are not the same in each of these narratives.

In the epic narrative from the *Mahābhārata,*[33] Duṣyanta meets Śakuntalā while on a hunt in the forests. He proposes marriage after being attracted to her. Śakuntalā consents only after Duṣyanta promises his throne to their prospective child. After their wedding in *gāndharva* fashion,[34] Duṣyanta returns to his kingdom, Hastināpura. In the meantime a son is born to Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta forgets all about her. However, she proceeds to Hastināpura to claim her rights as his wife by arguing for Bharata's right to Duṣyanta's throne. Śakuntalā also explains to Duṣyanta the importance of a lineage. But Duṣyanta merely heaps abuse on her, as well as, her parents. Śakuntalā prepares to assertively return to the forest and live all by herself. At this point, there is a divine declaration that Śakuntalā is indeed Duṣyanta's wife and that Bharata is their son. Duṣyanta accepts both and Bharata proves to be a great ruler. The epic folktale that is orally narrated to popular audience has a forceful Śakuntalā who vociferously struggles for her place in society.

The epic folk narrative is staged in a society of clans who maintained cattle as property, where lineage matters. Land was also needed for grazing and agriculture for which Duṣyanta had to usurp forestland. But, "... hunt is a surrogate raid, a war against nature" (Thaper 2000, 7). There is a detailed description of the ravaging of nature (1999, 35). Thaper observes that Śakuntalā is the very antithesis of *pativratā* of the "didactic" sections of the epic. She is free, morally assertive, marries on condition and demands that her husband fulfill his obligation of paternity. The mother of the first-born child enjoyed social prestige and was almost like property (Thapar, 15). Śakuntalā, according to Thaper, is very close to the women of the *Mahābhārata*—Kuntī, Gāndhārī, Draupadī—who are strong personalities. Even though it is a patriarchal society, Śakuntalā works for her place in the kinship between father and son. She asserts the paternity of her son, and does not foreground her own marital/romantic relation with Duṣyanta. Duṣyanta's personality is not very clearly etched in the epic. His forgetting of Śakuntalā is an individual failure for which he is reprimanded.

Further, his status of the king in a clan society was hardly absolute. Rather, the king needed both divine proclamation and the approval of his small well-knit clan. The exact time frame of the *Mahābhārata* has not been detected. But it can be placed between 400 BC and 400 AD, and the narrative section predates the didactic ones.[35]

Kālidāsa's play, *Abhijñāna-Śakuntalam* reflects another historical epoch. Its date of composition is circa 400 AD.[36] There is a conversion from epic story to the Sanskrit *nātaka* genre. Kālidāsa adds the famous events of the curse and the lost ring to the original. Duṣyanta gives his ring to Śakuntalā before leaving the forest for his kingdom. His ring promises that he will summon Śakuntalā to his kingdom, Hastināpura. At the *āśrama* in the meantime, Śakuntalā is lost in the thoughts of her husband and omits doing her duties to a visiting sage, *ṛṣi* Durvāsā.[37] He curses her that the person whom she is thinking of will forget her. After her friends plead with him, Durvāsā softens the curse by saying that the ring will assist remembrance. Subsequently, when Śakuntalā goes to meet Duṣyanta in a pregnant condition, he fails to recognize her. She has also lost her ring. Śakuntalā prays for help from the earth-goddess; her prayers are answered when she is transported to the *āśrama* in the forest where she gives birth to their son Bharata.[38] In the meantime, the ring is found in a fish and Duṣyanta recollects and pines for his wife and son. He is eventually united with them in a chance encounter at the *āśrama* on the way back to his kingdom from his war with the demons.

The Sanskrit play has elements from high elite culture (Thaper 2000, 9).[39] The play addresses an urban and refined audience. It is a written text, unlike the oral rendition of the epic. The content of the play also shows considerable changes in keeping with the changes in historical epoch. Instead of clans, there is the power of an established monarchy and state with its detailed administrative apparatus (it is probably the Gupta period). Kings in this society are equal to gods and Śakuntalā's submissiveness to Duṣyanta is that of the subject. The play does not deal with the tussle over paternity between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. Instead it foregrounds their romance and Śakuntalā's subsequent patient striving for recognition. The play underplays human agency—both of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta. Śakuntalā's conditional consent for marriage is absent. Kālidāsa develops the epic story by adding the ring instance from the *Kattahari Jātaka* of the Buddhists.[40] This absolves Duṣyanta of all blames, unlike the epic version, since he is under a spell. Moreover, the sage or *ṛṣi* Durvāsā has great control over the king.

The emphasis is on events that are beyond human will such as the curse and the ring that, according to Thaper, act as barriers to action. The ring and the curse also serve to highlight the romantic aspect of the play—that of the agony of separated lovers and their union. "The epic version had underlined the centrality of the son and the empowerment of the woman, both in herself and as the mother of a son. In the play, romantic love seems to supercede this, and the question of empowerment fades away" (Thaper 2000, 13).

Śakuntalā is not the assertive woman of the epic; she powerlessly and mournfully accepts her rejection, and waits for her recognition with great forbearance. She is also depicted as docile and forgiving. Not only does Śakuntalā forgive her husband, she also goes so far as to blame her own acts in her past life for her trauma. As Thaper concludes, the play cements the image of Śakuntalā as a *pativratā* or ideal wife.

The Sanskrit play's reputation as the finest piece of drama led to its being translated in *Braja-bhāṣā*—the language of mainstream Hindi poetry of the court poet, Navaz Kaviśvara of the Mughal emperor Farrukh Ṣiyar in the eighteenth century (14). As a story or *kathā* in verse, *Śakuntalā* exhibits the meetings, separations and unions characteristic of what is called Braja poetry. Śakuntalā's figure mediates between the version in the epic and the play. She is earthy and romantic simultaneously. In the nineteenth century, the Braja version was translated into an Urdu prose poem by Mirza Qasim Ali Dehlavi. In this text, Śakuntalā's shyness is accented with her hiding under a veil. The king Duṣyanta is like a romantic Persian hero (Farhad/Majnu) who swoons everytime he sees Śakuntalā.

The eighteenth century witnessed the colonial reception of the play. William Jones who was an officer with the East India Company at Calcutta, translated the Sanskrit version into Latin and then into English (15-18). The English version, *Sacontala* or *The Fatal Ring* was published in 1789. Jones described the play as the pinnacle of Indian civilization and also introduced a debate regarding the European unpalatability of its erotic passages. The play had a warm European reception. Goethe acclaimed its German translation. Many ballets and operas were staged on the theme. *Śakuntalā* was translated into Icelandic and even Russian. It was staged in Moscow just before the Bolshevik revolution. All of these translations since the nineteenth century and *Śakuntalā's* successful European reception made it the ultimate statement of Romanticism. Śakuntalā was seen as the child of nature and the quintessential Indian beauty. She was also viewed as someone who would represent universal beauty of women. Romanticism of Europe was accompanied by Orientalism—the Orient was discovered as a place of exotic beauty and nature. The colonizing Occident became less enthusiastic about the Romanticism and Orientalism towards the end of the nineteenth century. Its urge to reform the Orient was given up because natives were seen as beyond reform. Hence, by the end of the nineteenth century, Śakuntalā ceased to fascinate the Western world.

In India, however, Śakuntalā got a new lease of life. As Uma Chakravarti puts it, with the advent of colonization the forces of Orientalism, utilitarianism and nationalism invested in the image of the perfect Indian woman (1989). The Indian middle class adopted all the virtues of colonization—defined Indian tradition through Orientalism, which they used against the Utilitarians who denounced Indian culture. The figure of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* became crucial to asserting the superiority of the Indian past or its golden age. Utilitarians such as James Mill believed the play to represent all that is degenerate in Indian culture: the *gāndharva* marriages, the curse, the authority of the *brāhmaṇa*-s were all cited as instances to this effect. Those with an Orientalist bent such as Monier Williams felt that the play was a key to "Hindu" culture and would help the British in governance (Thaper 2000, 19). Monier Williams also wanted to give a sense of self-image to the Indian middle class. *Śakuntalā* shifts from being a child of nature to a rustic maiden in Monier Williams. The Orientalist interpretation of Kālidāsa-*Śakuntalā's pativratā* ideals of devotion, patience and self-sacrifice found its way into the nationalist stereotyping of Indian womanhood (20). Another aspect of these translations was a rigid attitude towards tradition itself, whereby to question it became a travesty.

There are two crucial dimensions in the vicissitudes of the narratives of *Śakuntalā*, the bifurcation between the forest or nature and the settlement or culture (36), in whose context the gendered identity is constructed as domestic. Patriarchal ideologies see culture as masculine and nature as feminine (Thaper 1999, 70). Thus, there is an overlap between the forest and Śakuntalā. As Thaper observes, in the epic version, there is a sensitivity shown to nature and Śakuntalā. She inhabits the hermitage, a space between the ecological cultures of the settlement (*grāma*) and the forest (*araṇya*) (36). Even though it had elements of the cultivated settlement—there was a greater emphasis on the forest aspect. The story hints at the lifestyle of the original forest dwellers with whom Duṣyanta was in conflict. Duṣyanta's hunt itself is portrayed as an attack on nature, which is projected as an unknown region.

Śakuntalā's assertiveness reflects a woman from another society—she is not a submissive subject, but believes in the equality of the wife and husband like a forest-dweller.[41]

The play tends to place culture before nature (63-76). Śakuntalā's *āśrama* is also a region between the forest and the settlement. However, it is closer to the settlement than the forest. An *āśrama* was the vanguard of the court, since it was constructed only after clearing forestland. The *āśrama* was a place being taken over for cultivation; though its people are in harmony with nature, they also know the codes of civilization. Hence, they are not original forest-dwellers but belong originally to the settlement.[42] Again, the forest is a place of exile in Indian texts. Śakuntalā is hardly a forest-dweller — Duṣyanta discovers that her father is a *Kṣatriya* (the sage Viśvāmitra) through her talkative companions. The play also makes nature an exotic other, seen through the lens of urban life. Śakuntalā is closely identified with nature in dress and demeanor. She exemplifies the romantic urban image of the forest-dweller as innocent and even confused by her desire for Duṣyanta. The forest is seen as wild and unruly; it is tamed by the ways of the court or settlement. (This aspect of the play was translated into the idiom of German romanticism). It also becomes a source of revenue in keeping with the Gupta period. Śakuntalā herself changes while leaving the forest for her husband. Both her guardian *ṛṣi* Kaṇva and her husband insist on the servitude of women to their husbands. Śakuntalā is established through a series of relationships with men in her family—her father Viśvāmitra for being a *Kṣatriya,* her foster-father Kaṇva, her husband Duṣyanta, and as the mother of Duṣyanta's son. The conquest of the forest-dwellers by civilization becomes obvious when at the end the king unites with Śakuntalā in the forest, bringing his meeting with her at the start of the play to a full circle.

The British colonization only aggravated the alienation of forest-dwellers (Devy 2005). According to Devy, the British homogenized Indian society and culture in a bid to simplify the variety of social formations such as sedentary agriculturalists, forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers, pastoralists and even nomadic traders. Devy observes that nomads and forest-dwellers have been ostracized in Western history as well. The British viewed forest-dwellers as demons that had to be civilized. To this effect, motley groups of pastoral, nomadic and forest communities were grouped together with other sedentary groups, such as the coin-makers or the Meenas and the eunuchs to be labeled as criminal under the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) in 1871.[43] They were forced to labour for large development projects such as dams. The forest communities were deprived of access to trees that were used for commercial purposes. Despite the independent Indian government denotifying criminal tribes, people who belonged to these tribes could hardly enter into occupations because of social stigma and their lacking occupational skills. The colonial reception of *Śakuntalā* reflects all of these prejudices. It is also present in the contemporary period's neglect and exploitation of tribal land for teak trees and construction of urban buildings on their land (Acharya 2005; Sharma 2005).

With respect to the equation of women with domesticity, the notion of a perfect wife played a pivotal role in the state and economy, both in pre-colonial, colonial and post-independent India. Kunkum Sangari has remarked that with the advent of the British, marriage in India was not just a civil contract, but assumed a moral dimension (1993, 35). Domesticity is the site of labour–here the relation between women and men determined whether they were pure or impure. Thus, the family exploited widows, destitutes and even prostitutes in its economy that covered subsistence, agricultural and artisanal activity. Since the past two decades the structural adjustment programmes have relegated women to low-paid jobs where they render services such as caring for the sick and the aged, that is performed by the state in the developed world, within their family (Banerjee 1999, 332-33). In fact, the World Bank has gone so far as to declare women's workforce as 'expensive' and 'inflexible' to encourage their employment in the domestic and unorganized sector (Sangari 1999, 459-60, n. 17). Structural adjustment programmes have applauded the domestic nature of Indian women (288).

Thaper observes that "In the last two centuries we have ignored the Shakuntala of the Mahabharata, the liberated woman demanding to be justly treated, and have endorsed the more submissive Shakuntala of Kalidasa, a woman waiting patiently for a recognition of her virtues" (Thaper 1999, 262). This endorsement is a part of the 21st century's increasing economic intrusions into tribal societies that are labeled as alien or strange. The tolerant housewife Śakuntalā is the epitome of the woman who preserves the household and the homogeneity of her husband's community in turn. Women labour in the constricted space of domesticity to reproduce and conserve their communities, often without any recognition. Thus, women enable men to transcend kinship relations to acquire a sense of individuality in the non-domestic sphere (1985a, 214-226). Women are isolated from each other in the household. In fact, the concept of the woman as having a primary role of preservation is as old as civilization.

Men who are owners of property, nations and cultures tend to showcase the mother-son relationship (Irigaray 1994, 91-112). Women in their traditional role as preservers of family blood-relations, ward off foreign relations. As Irigaray notes, they reproduce the logic of the same. In this respect then, Śakuntalā is evoked in the "unseen war"[44] against tribal populations waged through development projects that encroach into forest to dislocate, impoverish and even eradicate them. Not only is the middle-class *pativratā* subordinated to what Irigaray calls the role of mediating among men (1985a, 214-226), but she also plays an indirect role in dominating tribal women. Mothers of the Warli tribe that resides on the outskirts of Mumbai have lost more than 6,675 children who died due to starvation in December 2004. The number continues as the outcome of builders who claim their land for housing well-off people in Mumbai, where women can be ideal wives. There is a concomitant loss of community and lives for tribal women whose duties of fetching water and firewood are obstructed (Sainath 1996, 75). Thus, Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā enjoys a privilege over the epic forest-dwelling Śakuntalā.

Women in tribal societies tend to bear most of the burdens of so-called development and ecological disasters. In this context, there is a necessity to reconstruct the epic version where the tribal Śakuntalā struggles for justice, as opposed to the play version. Hence, one would have to recreate a tribal Śakuntalā, an original forest-dweller and her travails of hunger and poverty in inhabiting a forest that is being eroded by an ecological crisis spawned through the exploitative development programmes by forces of modernization funded by the corporate West. This gives rise to a whole lot of questions: Instead of Duṣyanta taming Śakuntalā in the mores of his culture, what if Śakuntalā forced Duṣyanta to accept her forest culture?[45] What if Śakuntalā came to represent a social criticism of a greedy society that develops by exploiting the people of the forest and the forest itself? What if Śakuntalā challenged the nature/culture dichotomy to show as feminists do, the constructed aspect of nature itself? Would Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā have happily lived even with a daughter? Would their daughter inherit the throne? What about Śakuntalā's own tribal community? What about her relation with women and men she has never met, who fall outside the bounds of her community? The ideal wife or *pativratā* who is a link in the chain of blood-ties is problematic from a gendered angle.[46] This is the unknown, the alien aspect of the forest, which the many standard versions of *Śakuntalā* do not discuss. The alien aspect of tribal lives is a crucial part of contemporary societies that depend on them and yet exclude them. Yet considering that language itself has an orientation towards an other, who cannot be predicted, one could begin to address these erasures from mainstream cultural symbols. The epic version of *Śakuntalā* to which Thapar has drawn our attention, has brought out the hidden forest-dwelling Śakuntalā into the open.

Gadamer rightly observes that the implications of a text are ambivalent from the contemporary point of view. It is only when the text's relation to its present fades away that one can attempt an understanding that is universal (1975, 265). The epic version of *Śakuntalā* aptly illustrates this point. It occupies an intermediate position between familiarity and strangeness, of being a part of tradition as well as being separate from it. The tension between the text and the present must not be covered up through some naïve assimilation but should be retained (273). Yet Gadamer tries to underplay this tension in his privileging of the Greek model of friendship.

III. Conversation Between Friends at Home?

Gadamer categorically says that understanding and its relation to tradition is not reproductive, but productive. This implies that there are no certain substantive virtues in tradition to be preserved. In fact, Gadamer also rules out the possibility of having the last word on texts given through tradition. The conversation between an interpreter and a text from the past will take unpredictable turns giving rise to a rich body of interpretations. This can be seen with reference to the complex trajectory of *Śakuntalā.* Gadamer's linguistic turn discerns openness and room for alterity and alienness in the conversational pattern of language. However, there is a tension between the foreign and the familiar in his hermeneutic philosophy; it becomes apparent when Gadamer grounds hermeneutics in ethos and views the intimate circle of friendship as the primary model of conversation.

A: The Home as a *Leitmotif* in Language, *Bildung* and Friends

According to Gadamer, "Language completely surrounds us like the voice of home which prior to our every thought of it breathes a familiarity from time out of mind" (1976, 97).[47] He believes like Heidegger that language is a home in which we comfortably dwell. Thus, when players submit to the play (*Spiel*) of language (Smith 1980, x-xi), they yield to the larger than human force of *oikeion,* or that in which they feel at home. In being at home in language one is among friends. Gadamer grounds hermeneutics in everyday, "being habitually understanding towards others" (1981, 133). This consists in a sensitivity to the deliberations of the other, which is not confined to what is said. Rather it is a sensitivity that results from a commonality of virtues. There is a mutual give and take of opinions, counsel and the like, which makes it clear that "Only friends and persons with an attitude of friendliness can give advice" (133-35). Practical reason is not a neutral finding of right means to correct ends (that are already there) but is bound up with ethos. For Aristotle, ethos is an *arche*, or that from which all practical/political engagement springs.[48] His human beings are already shaped by the normative images in the light of which they are brought up.[49]

Such allusions to the Greek model of friendship lays Gadamer open to Habermas' indictment that he uncritically gives in to substantive tradition, while the latter's ethnocentric tone appeals to Rorty. At the outset, one has to clarify that Gadamer's cultural patriotism is not explicit—neither Habermas nor Rorty has tried to locate the source of such a discourse in Gadamer. One can hardly locate it in Gadamer's turn to tradition, as it has been argued above; yet, there is implicit ethnocentrism in his restriction of dialogue to a conversation between friends and *Bildung* as a primary feature of hermeneutic socialization.

By grounding hermeneutics in ethos, Gadamer restricts hermeneutics to a dialogue among friends (Misgeld, 1990). He approvingly cites the Greek attitude to friendship as the path to the highest truth (Gadamer 1980, 1999).[50] According to Gadamer, friendship is a clue to moving beyond the paradigm of an ahistorical self-consciousness, since Descartes. "Friendship cannot be the business of the one or the other" (1999, 131); it is a reciprocal relation of a "... true bond that—in various degrees—signifies a 'life together'" (132). Quoting Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, for whom friendship is a public political virtue, Gadamer develops his account of friendship through a reading of Plato's dialogue *Lysis* (1980) and through Aristotle's discussions of the same (1999).

Friendship is the basis of a just community that is also moral, since ethics and politics are interrelated in Greek thought (1980, 1999).[51] Friends are not in a state of immature and childish competition, but are bound by equality,[52] in being good. By implication friendship also entails knowledge; it is not based on use or an insufficiency in either party, which it remedies. Such a conditional friendship will be terminated as soon as the need is over, and is, therefore, not real. It is because friendship is not conditional that it leads to that which is ultimately real. Friendship "consists in the fact that a person finds his self-awareness, his self-confidence through the other ..." (1980). This too is a need; however, it is a need for that which belongs to one and which can never be terminated—this need is as stable as that of a household.

Friends always become more for each other—there is a tension and an attraction in friendship. Gadamer connects friendship with the semantic field of all that is intimate and close. According to Gadamer, the Greek word *oikeion* or that which pertains to the household, summarizes friendship (1980, 18). Although *oikos* in Greek means the economic unit of the household, it basically stands for being at home or the place where everything is familiar. The German equivalent of *oikeion* is *die Angehörigen* or *das Angehörige.* Interestingly, *das Angehörige* is also related to *das Zugehörige* or that which is proper to the household or that which pertains or belongs to it.[53] Gadamer summarizes quoting Socrates, "... when someone loves another as a friend, his longing is directed to the other person in such a way that the former fulfills himself in this longing. Ultimately, what he seeks is that quality in the other which pertains to him and which gives his longing legitimacy" (1980, 19).[54]

Reciprocal love with another in the most perfect form leads to the highest form of self-love or friendship with one's self (1999).[55] In friendship we do not blame the other for our own faults, but learn to identify our faults as ours. Gadamer citing Aristotle says that friendship leads to self-knowledge. It is through the friend that one becomes one with one's own self. "The other, the friend, means much to the person, not because of the person's need or lack, but for the sake of his own self-fulfillment" (138). It is the common bond between friends that allows for each of them to gain self-understanding. Self-knowledge is certainly not self-interest or selfishness where one is opposed to the other. Rather, it is the commonality between self and the other — a mirror in which one sees oneself. In the mirror of the friend one could encounter anything from the alien to the narcissistic. Yet the mirror of the friend is an encounter of fulfillment, and not that of a demand or even a duty or a command. Rather, the friend is a "living counter-part" (139). One sees the better self in the friend, not just one's own mirror image and one also devotes oneself to this self. All of this contributes to the shared aspects in which one begins to recognize and develop one's self.

In the communication among friends there is "a real embedding in the texture of communal human life" (139). Thus, for Gadamer, the Greeks have taught us the importance of being with or living with or *Mitsein*. Here one lives with one's friends where one does not really do anything by one's self that one does not also do with one's friends. Moreover, friends also expose one to divinity; quoting Euripedes he says "... to know a friend—that too is god" (140). Gadamer identifies the great appeal of Greek theory of friendship to the contemporary technological period of alienated subjects. He says, "Responding to its appeal are forms of life such as marriage and family, solidarity among friends, among people of all ranks and situations, and among all nations and states" (141).

According to Gadamer, understanding proceeds through "the communality that binds us to the tradition" established through a constant process of education (1975, 261). Gadamer's *Bildung* or education, where substantive cultural processes are handed down for individual learning, operates within a coterie of friends who are at home with one another. "To seek one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being is only to return to itself from what is the other . . . Thus, evey individual is always engaged in the process of *Bildung* and in getting beyond his naturalness ..." (15). But *Bildung* need not imply that human beings are flag-wavers of substantive traditions. As Warnke remarks, one can agree with being a part of a specific acculturation process, but this does not imply that one embraces its substantive aspects and attributes normative worth to it (1987, 106). In fact, to agree with a tradition or a point of view has two senses: a concrete unity of judgement and a critical integration. Gadamer reduces the latter to the former. Reflection does not have to reject the existence of cultural givens, it always operates after them. Unless we are educated or *gebildet* in a mechanical fashion, we cannot criticize it – in this sense, reflection on tradition is also its reappropriation—albeit a selective one (Habermas 1988, 170).[56] Through the conversation between what is contemporary and the past, one goes beyond both positions to arrive at "a new stage of tradition" (Warnke 1987, 104).[57]

B: Beyond the Proximate

The Politics of Friendship

Friendship (*philîa/phileîn*) does not culminate in appreciating alterity (Derrida 1997). Gadamer repeatedly alludes to the Greek model of friendship. As Derrida remarks, the history of Western philosophy—both canonical (Plato-Aristotle and Motaigne and Kant), as well as, unorthodox (such as Nietzsche)—is replete with image of friendship (1997). Further, "... the great philosophical and canonical discourses on friendship will have explicitly tied the friend-brother to virtue and justice, to moral reason and political reason" (227).[58] The Platonic-Aristotelian account of justice as *daikosune* is founded on friendship.[59] Moreover, the modern political discourse of democracy also appeals to the singularity of friends in its fraternity — each individual has to be counted before the law.

According to Derrida, in the Greek discourse, the friend is someone rare or exemplary, with whom one has familiarity or proximity. The friend is an equal, someone who is near and friendship grows with proximity (240). Considering that only those who are good, and few in number, can be friends, one cannot have too many of them. There is singularity and irreplaceability of neatly carved subjects with proper names who are united in friendship. Friends also speak to one another—directly and face to face. Moreover, considering the rarity of friendship, friends also share secrecy. After all, one can say everything to one's friend and those who have too many friends have none. Being at home with one's friend requires that the friend be a brother. Thus, friends evoke a "... familial, fraternalist and thus androcentric configuration of politics" (1997, viii). Politics itself becomes an adherence of State to family, there is an attachment to stock, genus or species and sex, blood, birth, nature, nation.

Derrida argues that friendship introduces a homogeneity that runs through the canon.[60] Friendships between women or those between men and women do not have a place in the ancient and modern canonical discussions.[61] For instance, the sister and brother are not given any prominence in either the canon or culture (viii-ix). Further, this exclusion of the feminine is a part of any discourse that constrains women to the domestic space and men to the public. Such exclusion is only endorsed by a hermeneutical dialogue amongst friends as the various readings of *Śakuntalā,* subsequent to Kālidāsa, reveal. In each of them, Śakuntalā occupies the domestic space while Duṣyanta occupies a hierarchical order in public. He owns his kingdom, in whose interest he expands into the forest. Indeed, his *gāndharva* or consensual marriage to the forest-dwelling Śakuntalā is permissible only because of his status as a *Kṣatriya.*[62] The marriage signifies his expansion into the forest. The strong romantic tone of Kālidāsa's play as an instance of *śṛngāra rasa* also retains the woman as an object of *kāma* and love as opposed to friendship.[63] Śakuntalā becomes a part of Duṣyanta's property, a member of his household, his submissive subject as per the codes enshrined in the

Arthaśāstra.[64] Śakuntalā is hardly her king's equal or friend. Her role is merely one of enabling Duṣyanta to forge his community—with infinite patience. This is precisely why she is celebrated as the ideal wife in Tryambakayajvan's *Strīdharmapaddhati*–"the whole woman–as wife becomes absorbed into half the man" (1995, 31).[65]

Interestingly, diverse cultures within India – Sanskrit, Mughal, British and Bengali have all been loyal to this stereotypical version of Śakuntalā. They all advance conventional notions of morality that subjugate women to their own ways. Śakuntalā's plight can hardly be termed as culture specific. In order to retrieve and reconstruct the epic Śakuntalā, who asserts her, one would have to go beyond the secret circle of friendship that leaves existing social codes of exclusion intact. Consequently, the authority of tradition that stands for expert knowledge, rather than obedience,[66] tends to become rigid.

However, the notions of proximity, immediacy and homogeneity inherent to androcentric friendship have been problematized by feminists.

C: *Bildung* and Language as Homecoming

Gadamer privileges the home as the site of friendship. This is also apparent in his characterization of cultural-linguistic space as a familiar dwelling. According to Gadamer, human beings as language users should acquire *Bildung* or acquaintance with the familiar classical texts and arts of a given culture (1975, 10-19). *Gebilden* is a process by which human beings are transformed into cultured adults—different from their natural selves.

The whole notion of *Bildung* in Gadamer is a cultivation that attempts at a second birth of culture after that of nature. In Gadamer, the individual goes beyond the natural to get in the arts (Schott 206). He upholds that such cultivation is a homecoming where individuals find their homes in customs, institutions and even other cultures (26). For Gadamer then, one seeks one's own in the alien in the process of *Bildung* or going beyond the natural (1975, 15). Schott likens *Bildung* to the Hegelian process of the Spirit's return to itself. This return to the self is also evident in Gadamer's appreciation of Greek friendship as one where the friend enables the subject to discover himself and return to himself.

By endorsing standard interpretations of culture, "Gadamer fails to recognize the power of reflection that unfolds in *Verstehen*" (Habermas 1988, 168). As Misgeld remarks, in doing so "... he privileges a form of cultural learning not widely available, withheld from large sections of the population in modern societies'' (1990, 168).[67] Such an education in culture is peculiarly urban, so that it declines when urbanization declines (Habermas 1983, 194). However, if education merely alludes to the received classics in an elite culture, Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* would be all that is permitted. The epic *Śakuntalā* has not been a part of classical *Bildung*; it has been redeemed from the archives through Thaper's feminist reflection that is not at home in *Bildung*. Gadamer's attempt to defend substantive tradition in *Bildung* is an offshoot of his account of language as ``the dialogue we are''.[68] As Schott argues, he severs language from all socio-historical processes, to place everybody at the center (Schott, 205-08).[69] In fact, Gadamer neglects the empirical obstacles to dialogue. This becomes very explicit in his comprehension of language as a home – a permanent, secure, dwelling place that is not a temporary shelter, but a home. However, domesticity cannot be appealed to as a normative category because neither are all human beings at home in language, nor is it a naturally secure spot. Standard language refers to the feminine in the diminutive and criminalizes tribes; it also subjects them to hate-speech so that women and tribes do not feel at home in language. Further, the home is hardly a haven of equality. Historicizing the notion of domesticity reveals that it is a site of oppression for women and tribals (among others). ``The king's household''[70] in Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* condemns women and underprivileged men such as tribals to a life of drudgery and disempowerment—a condition that persists in the current globalized era (Desai 2000; Acharya 2005; Sharma 2005). Movements by tribes and women have been waging the struggle to become interpreters and to be heard. They have created possibilities for reading diversity in tradition, as well as, social criticism.[71] Thaper's reading and opening up of the epic *Śakuntalā* is possible only in the context of such struggles, which necessitates the reconstruction of tradition through agreement and disagreement (Habermas 1988, 168).

Indeed, the very notion of friends who inhabit a dwelling with secure borders is fraught with instability, both in the canon and the *Śāstra*-s. This is evident from the extent to which the home is defended in these texts.[72] The closed circle of friends has to be distinguished from outsiders or strangers, to acquire an identity. Yet these strangers also rupture friendship as the third party; they merely witness friendship, without being a part of it (Derrida 1997, 259-61).[73] This instability is not without promise for women and tribals (and so many others). That a part of traditional discourse has been dedicated to containing their lives within domestic spaces shows that they have been spilling over these constrained spaces.[74] Yet Gadamer himself claims that with respect to tradition, one does not just defend what is handed down, but freely shapes it. In which case, his ''basic hermeneutical wisdom'' is that there is no last word in tradition (Habermas 1983, 195). This, of course, is because of the mediation of language. After all, language does not belong to anybody nor does it confine anyone to domesticity, since it is oriented to the other or the foreign. This is precisely why one can create Indian tradition in the light of an ecological, tribal and gender sensibility in contemporary times. The assertive Śakuntalā of the epic has emerged through the oral histories of language to allow for 'solidarity with strangers' (Habermas 1996, 314). In fact, the linguistic horizon of hermeneutics permits the strange Śakuntalā of the epic to come out in the open in ecologically unstable times where women and tribals struggle for justice.

Notes and References

1. Warnke discusses the relation between Gadamer on the one hand, and Rorty and Habermas on the other, in great detail (1987, 107-66).
2. This unity is possible because of language.
3. According to Gadamer, understanding, whether it is theoretical or practical has two aspects: the reception of what is already given, being well-versed in something (this could be a text or a trade), as well as, disclosure of what is hidden in the text or the trade by projecting meanings in accordance with available possibilities. Thus, understanding is a phenomenon where what is hidden comes out into the open.
4. Of course, as his writings reveal, Habermas is well aware of Gadamer's strengths, as well. See, for example, Habermas (1983).
5. See Irigaray, 1985a. Philosophical traditions in India as well as the West are characterized by the exclusion of women. See Kelkar and Gangavane (2003).
6. Also see Scheibler for this point (2000, 33-70).
7. Emphasis added.
8. Gadamer approvingly quotes Wilhelm von Humboldt as saying that language is not just a possession that one has, but rather the condition for one's capacity to experience the world (Gadamer 1975, 401). Thus, human beings as language users do not just have a surrounding, but an environment (402-3). Unlike a habitat or surrounding (*Umwelt*), an environment or world (*Welt*) is something with which one has a free relation that permits variety.
9. For Gadamer the linguistic nature of tradition becomes very clear in the case of written traditions (1975, 353), although Gadamer also adds that writing and speech go beyond the intentions of the author (354). Language itself is divorced from all context and psychology to acquire an ideality of meaning (1975, 355).

10. Although Gadamer is much influenced by Greek philosophy, he does not restrict the essence of language to a statement, as the Greeks do, but expands it to dialogue (1975, 404).
11. Habermas is mentioned because despite his differences with Gadamer he has much in common with Gadamer. He has made explicit many of Gadamer's implicit notions and his disagreements have resulted in his developing the thesis of critical hermeneutics.
12. Kierkegaard similarly distinguishes objective truth as an instance of this (1968, 67-74). As Kierkegaard puts it, such truth can be directly communicated. In contrast, subjective truth requires indirect communication—it contains scope for irony and ambivalence.
13. Gadamer rejects psychologizing any philosophical text by turning to the author's intended meaning (1975, 264).
14. Dilthey, in his hermeneutics, uses method to recreate the historical epoch of the text.
15. Kathleen Roberts Wright defends Gadamer against such interpretations imputed to him by Julia Ellison (2003, 41-50). In fact, both versions of dialogue imprison either the interpreter or the text in its own language, so that there is no meeting between them.
16. That is, to understand, interpret and apply through dialogue is an everyday activity.
17. But even from the point of view of the text's future, an interpreter does not have access to all possible future interpretations to arrive at its complete meaning.
18. The fusion of horizons takes place both on a vertical plane where historical distance is overcome, as well as, on a horizontal plane where cultural distance is overcome (Habermas 1988, 151).
19. Gadamer avers that while interpreting, what Heidegger terms as the forestructure of understanding, is brought to play (1975, 225-34). The interpreter projects a meaning on to the text on the basis of what she or he already has, forehaving (*Vorhabe*), her expectations or foresight (*Vorsicht*), as well as, her foreconception (*Vorgriff*).
20. In order to acquire a historical horizon, we have to make an effort. There is always the tendency to assimilate the past to the present, which is nearest to the interpreter, whose hopes, and fears affect the interpreter. One should try to listen to the voice of the past, especially because it leads to the formation of the horizon of the present according to Gadamer (1975, 272-3).
21. "... the working out of the hermeneutical situation means the achievement of the right horizon of enquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition" (1975, 269).
22. As Habermas puts it, the notion of a horizon that Gadamer takes from Husserl, allows for including everything that is linguistically alien and unintelligible (Habermas 1988, 151).
23. Gadamer does not disregard the self, but situates it.
24. As Kant says in his refutation of idealism, subjectivity implies objectivity (1965, 244-47).

25. In fact, Gadamer distances himself from Rorty's Nietzschean view that there are many diverse horizons (1975, 272).
26. In the same vien Gadamer says that the author does need to know the exact meaning of what has been written (1975, 264). In fact, the interpreter will know more than the author (1975, 264).
27. Of course, this communication is not a smooth flowing one, as if without any problems. Warnke rightly observes that one has to avoid the opportunism of imposing the interpreter's own cultural presuppositions on to tradition, as well as, the conservatism of tradition's own assumptions being imposed on the interpreter (1987, 99). Gadamer's use of the term authority—that the text has authority in the sense of having superior knowledge and being better informed than the interpreter — tends to favour a conservative reading. In fact, the notion of authority introduced by Gadamer is very problematic. He makes it very clear that by authority he does not mean an autocrat or dictator, but just the expert's voice. But if hermeneutics cannot evoke the expert, it has to provide an alternative to the challenge of scientism and positivism where the expert is privileged. Yet, this does not imply that one should favour an opportunistic reading of texts.
28. See Lorrain Code (2003).
29. Emphasis mine.
30. The discussion that follows is derived from Thaper 1999 and 2000.
31. Thaper (1999) contains a translation of the epic from *Mahābhārata* and Barbara Stoler Miller's translation of Kālidāsa's *Abhijñāna-Śakuntalam* as *Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection.* Thaper's book also contains Orientalist receptions of the play in the form of William Jones' Preface to *Śacontala* or *The Fatal Ring* and Monier William's Introduction to *Śakoontala* or *The Lost Ring.* Thaper has also provided excerpts from *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and Somadeva's *Kathāsaritasāgara.*
32. Thaper has also documented a possible Buddhist reception in Ranigumpha cave in Orissa which goes back to the second century B.C. (1999, 42). It has also been visually depicted on an expensive decorative box's lid – dating back to 145 B.C. – and a clay disc from Bhita that suggests the Christian era (1999, 43). Raja Ravi Verma has also painted Śakuntalā. Thaper also notes the film versions of *Śakuntalā*: K. Subramaniam's Sakuntalai (1940-Tamil) and V. Shantaram's 'Shakuntala (1943) in Hindi. Shantaram does introduce a defiant Śakuntalā towards the end of the film (1999, 261). There was also Nachiket Patwardhan's Anantayatra (1985) where Śakuntalā forces a contemporary upper-class urban man in Mumbai to reflect on the urban milieu (261-62).
33. Each version of *Śakuntalā* is taken from Thaper (1999, 10-43). This is from the *Ādi Parva* section of the *Mahābhārata* (Thaper 1999, 16-35).
34. A *gāndharva* marriage is one of consent that is permitted by the *Śāstra*-s to the *Kṣatriya* caste (Thaper 2000, 6).

35. Thaper observes that the narrative section of the epic also conflicts with the didactic section that spells out duties to the individual as per *varṇa* or social position.
36. Thaper admits that given the broad period of placing the epic *Mahābhārata*, it is quite possible for it to be close to Kālidāsa's version in time. After all, the time frame for the epic stretches till 4th century AD overlapping Kālidāsa (Thaper 1999, 7). However, she also rightly observes that the differences between the two versions of *Śakuntalā* are not necessarily chronological. It is quite possible for two versions to vary even within the same period because they come from diverse social contexts. The epic has been orally presented to an audience of clansmen and chieftains. In fact, the epic itself has a long oral past of folk narratives. The oral nature makes the epic narrative prone to repetitions and formulae (Thaper 1999, 8). The play is a "court drama, written in finely honed and crafted language" whose audience consisted of educated and urban people from the upper strata (Thaper 1999, 8).
37. Thaper observes that perhaps these duties might have required Śakuntalā to perform "a different kind of hospitality for which she was not willing" (1999, 59). Whether or not such a placation of the guest prevailed in Kālidāsa's society, hospitality was an aspect of gift exchange (1999, 59).
38. Her mother Menakā takes her to the *āśrama* of Marica (Thaper 1999, 61).
39. As Thaper observes, language marks social status. In the play women and men of low status speak *Prakṛt* (Thaper 1999, 78).
40. According to Thaper, the episode of the ring can be traced to a Buddhist *Jātaka* tale (1999, 55, 56-58).
41. That her mother is an *apsarā*, Menakā who seduced the sage Viśvāmitra is perhaps an attempt to shield her forest origins (1999, 39). *Apsarā*-s are different from the women of the earth and they are said to come from another world (1999, 41). They are the very opposite of the devoted wife (1999, 41). The *apsarā* origin could well be a metaphor for Śakuntalā's forest origin. For a detailed account of the freedom enjoyed by *apsarā*-s who signify fertility without being bound by marriage and their role in epics, see Thaper (1999, 40-41). Thaper also remarks that bride price that is hinted at in this epic is also an indication of Śakuntalā coming from a society that is different from Duṣyanta's Hastināpura (1999, 39).
42. There is, according to Thaper, a reversal of roles. The court, which was originally a place for union, became a place for separation, while the *āśrama* that originally separated, became a place for union between the couple (2000, 12-13).
43. Many of the communities labeled as criminal were not tribes, but included in the lower caste sections of Indian society (Devy 2005).
44. This expression is from Sainath (1996, 75).
45. Nachiket Patwardhan's film *Anantayatra* does suggest this aspect.

46. As Irigaray observes, "The beginnings of patriarchal power as we know it—which means the power of the man as the legal head of the family, tribe, people, state and so on—coincided with the separation of women from each other" (1994, 13).
47. Schott, Robin (1991, 205).
48. *Phronesis* is also crucial for Aristotle in this respect because it is an ultimate virtue leading to concretization (Gadamer 1981, 134).
49. Of course, at this point Gadamer also adds that this normative perspective is not beyond criticism (1981, 135). Social life always transforms what was previously valid. "The point here is a notion of science that does not allow for the ideal of the nonparticipating observer but endeavors instead to bring to our reflective awareness the communality that binds everyone together" (135).
50. In his essay of 1990, Gadamer discusses Plato's *Lysis*, which is a dialogue on friendship. He connects it with Plato's mature work in *Symposium*. According to Gadamer, Plato's *Lysis* ends in an *aporia* because its protagonists are too young to really know what is friendship. Plato fittingly pursues the matter of friendship in his mature works.
51. Thus, for Gadamer, Greek practical philosophy offers an alternative to the problematics of subjectivity. This is because the individual is correlated with the community—"... Plato could think of world, city, and soul all in one ..." (1999, 131).
52. This is precisely why Schott's diagnosis of Gadamer as espousing competitiveness of play and masculine militarism by implication is problematic (Schott, 204). Schott observes that girls do not submit to the play like boys. However, her gendered critique of Gadamerian play overlooks that for Gadamer play is not a competitive game but an activity that is creative, non-subjective with flexible rules. On all these counts, feminists can appropriate Gadamerian language.
53. The German word *gehoren* means to belong. However, the translator Christopher Smith also likens *gehoren* to *horen*, which means to hear (1980, 19, n.7). Consequently, for Smith, there is an overcoming of the visual theoretical perspective in Gadamer. However, *gehoren* has certainly got visual connotations and the extent to which Gadamer transcends the notion of belonging is not very clear.
54. If the dialogue *Lysis* is not to end as an *aporia,* the overlap between *oikeion,* the same and the good will have to be maintained. If they are viewed as distinct, the dialogue is certainly inconclusive, and one has no idea of friendship (Gadamer 1999).
55. Friendship with one's own self is possible only when one is good (Gadamer 1999, 135). Moreover, it is like the unity of the soul between instinct and reason. The latter that are naturally in a state of conflict would have to be united for friendship. This is not something that animals can accomplish. Hence, friendship is the most defining characteristic of all that is human (135).
56. Gadamer starts out claiming that "My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens

to us over and above our wanting and doing'' (1975, xvi). Here Gadamer does not construe hermeneutics to be description of any existing culture, as Habermas alleges. Rather, one can read him as specifying the transcendental condition of understanding that underlies human wants and actions.

57. Gadamer himself appeals to the distinction between experience as *Erlebnisse* that is a first person immediate sense and *Erfahrung*, where one negates the faults of the previous experience to build upon it (1975, Warnke 1987, 26-30, 35-36, 104-5).
58. This holds for Nietzsche as well, who is against the canon (Derrida 1997, 49-74).
59. Aristotle distinguishes between three forms of justice on the basis of the three forms of friendship: of virtue, of usefulness and of pleasure (Derrida 1997, 230). Out of these, Aristotle identifies the friendship founded on virtue as primary. Aristotle's distinction follows Plato.
60. Even Nietzsche who critiques the canon subscribes to its limited notion of friendship in terms of freedom, equality and fraternity.
61. This holds for the Hindu strand of Indian tradition as well. Although *Maitrī* is a cardinal virtue in Hinduism it is only conditionally linked to women. The *ṚgVeda* prohibits friendship with women (X.95.14). Friendship outside the family is based on pragmatism, according to *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* It is like men's interest in women or that of bees in flowers (SB 10.47.6). The exclusion of women from the discourse on friendship is most explicit in Nietzsche, who goes so far as to openly proclaim that women (and slaves) are not capable of friendship, but only love (Derrida 1997, 282).
62. Both the *Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* legitimize such a marriage, given the warring and expanding functions of the *Kṣatriya* caste.
63. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* aesthetics of Abhinavagupta is delineated in his first chapter of *Abhinavabhāratī* (Sunthar 1983). Here Abhinavagupta explicitly says that there are various emotions or moods that enrapture one in a work of art. But these are basically divided as per the goals of human life, *puruṣārtha*-s. There are four *puruṣārtha*-s and correspondingly there are four primary *rasa*-s. For *kāma* there is *śṛingārarasa* (love), for *artha* there is *raudra* or anger, for *dharma* there are *vīra* or heroism and *śuddha vibhatsa* or disgust with the world; for *mokṣa* there is *śānta* or tranquility or *nirveda* or world-weariness. Thus, the mood of love—both in union and in separation — satisfies *kāma* or desire. Feminists have observed how the *puruṣārtha*-s exclude women; the exclusion begins with the very name *puruṣārtha* (Belsare, 2003). One can similarly claim that each of these *rasa*-s prescribed by Abhinavagupta are masculine in their orientation.
64. The *Arthaśāstra* can be traced to the period between fourth/third century BC to the second century AD (Roy 1999, 18-19). The *Manusmṛti* (between second century BC and the second/fourth century AD) and the *Kāmasūtra* (second and fourth century AD) endorse the

domestic as natural to women (Roy 1999, 18-19). Of course, each of the *śāstra*-s defends a specific goal—the *Arthaśāstra* aims at *artha* or material well-being, the *Manusmṛti* defends *dharma* and the *Kāmasūtra* defends *kāma* (Roy, 20; *Gokhalā*, 2002). There are only three goals to begin with and *mokṣa* was a latter addition.

65. Tryambakayajvan's *Strīdharmapaddhati* or the *Guide to the Religious Status and Duties of Women* was written in the eighteenth century by an orthodox priest (priests) in Thanjavore court of South India (Leslie, 3). Tanjavore was ruled by Marathas (Śāhajī and Śerfojī) at that time.
66. As Habermas points out, Gadamer's emphasis on the authority of tradition is problematic (1988, 168-169).
67. See Gadamer's discussion of the classical example (1975, 253-58).
68. Habermas traces Gadamer's problem to his ontological understanding of hermeneutics *a la* Heidegger (1988, 167).
69. This quotation is from Schott's citation of Gadamer (208).
70. This expression is from Kumkum Roy (1999), who gives a detailed account of the architectural and human aspects of the household in the *Arthaśāstra*.
71. As Misgeld observes, popular movements have the potential to resist the processes of administrative rationality, which Gadamer has neglected (1990, 169). The Chipko and the Narmada movements in India, as well as, active resistance by Warli tribals are instances of resisting the technological rationality of big dams and development projects.
72. With respect to Tryambakayajvan's *Strīdharmapaddhati*, Leslie notes that its strict regulations on women were compiled at a time when the high-caste Hindu orthodoxy was threatened by 'outsiders' (1995, 4). These threats were probably those of Islam, Christian missionaries, European traders and especially the local Tamil women who enjoyed some modicum of freedom compared to those of the court. One cannot neglect the force of the *Bhakti* movement, which promised liberation to women, and the underprivileged sections of society. Thus, the overlapping forces of colonialism, Orientalism and nationalism that went on to define the woman as the worshipping wife evolved over a period of a few hundred years in the post-medieval period in India.
73. Thus, the condition for the possibility of friendship is also a condition for its impossibility.
74. Both Leslie (1995) and Roy (1999) make this point. Prohibitions of somewhat non-patriarchal practices show the existence of such practices among people, at least, at an informal level. The epic *Śakuntalā* is an instance of the same.

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9

Extrapolating Hermeneutics and Its Circle of Understanding

P.K. Mukhopadhyay

> "I have taken for granted that any 'serious' philosophical viewpoint should contain at least a good measure of realism. It always surprises me when I learn of apparently serious-minded thinkers, often physicists concerned with the implications of quantum mechanics, who take strongly subjective view that there is, in actuality, *no* real world 'out there' at all! The fact that I take a realistic line wherever possible is not meant to imply that I am unaware that such subjective views are often seriously maintained – only that I am unable to make sense of them".
>
> Penrose

> "[It is a] fiction to believe that Socratic dialogue is possible everywhere and at any time".
>
> Habermas

The paper is not an exercise in hermeneutics;[1] it is the author's response to certain emerging trends and tendencies observable today among some of his philosophical colleagues in India. These scholars are among those who are purportedly doing hermeneutics under the expressed belief that it has been here for a long time. Some are also there who wish to be known as searching for the presence of hermeneutics in India. I have my own misgivings about both the searches in question and Hermeneutics itself. I will begin by explaining and justifying some of these misgivings. In the process, I will first try to specify the meaning of hermeneutics, at least for the purpose of this paper. For it is next to impossible a task to come up with any single set of doctrines or considerations that we can attribute, in all contexts, to all, or nearly all who are (or are accepted as) doing or believing in hermeneutics. I would also identify some of the basic features of hermeneutics. Our attempt at specifying the meaning in question will necessitate a close look into the very long history of the development of the subject – from medieval hermeneutics as message analysis through renaissance humanist's hermeneutics as historical and critical methodology for analyzing texts to twentieth century continental philosophical hermeneutics as critique of the ideology of science. This is necessary if we are to unearth the cultural determinants that played their role in giving birth to this subject – or better, movement – and in shaping its form and nature. These determinants are almost constitutive of the subject in question and our notion of it. We will later use the basic features we identify for arriving at both a negative and a positive answer to questions regarding the problem and prospect of doing hermeneutics in India. Basic features in question include apart from interpretation and critique of science, emphasis on authentic understanding of tradition and need for a dialogical engagement with it. There is also the shift from episteme to praxis. Though I believe that these last two are among the most important features from the Indian point of view yet I may not have space or time even to introduce them here. In my discussion of other features and in fact all through, I will be very brief. As a compensatory measure against possible failure of understanding or misunderstanding, I will presuppose a close acquaintance on the part of the readers with the relevant history and literature of the subject. My misgiving about the great eagerness on the part of some scholars to find hermeneutics in India stems from what little I know about the nature and history of thought of the two cultures – Western (Anglo-American and European) and Indian. My other misgiving has to do with my aligning my views with the authentic understanding and practice of Indian philosophy in general and of Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā in particular. From this background, I would like to present in this paper, for critical consideration of all, three theses. First, in India there never obtained the cultural determinants that necessitated the birth and growth of hermeneutics, as it is and as it should be understood to be. Secondly, the fundamental nature of those schools of Indian philosophy where people find the presence of hermeneutics is opposed to the basic nature and outlook of hermeneutics. My third thesis is that tradition is one theme where there is opportunity for fruitful exchange and cooperation between continental hermeneuticists on the one hand and two groups of modern Indians – the traditionalists and the reformists. Their opposition to tradition characterizes modernity in general and reformist modern India in particular. The anti-tradition attitude of these Indians in its turn is marked by negative bias nurtured by pathetic ignorance about their own tradition they criticize and a general misconception about tradition – what it is and what does it mean. They take tradition to be dead past exerting a regressive influence stalling man's enterprise of free inquiry and progress. Previously, on many occasions, I discussed these matters without referring to hermeneutics. I explained there what the modern traditionalists of contemporary India, as distinct from more westernized modern Indians, think to be the right conception of tradition and right attitude towards it. Continental hermeneuticist's attitude to tradition is very close to it. One of their central themes and agenda of work is creative dialogical engagement with tradition. This is a continuation of the programme of humanism for them. In their own interest and the interest of India's classical tradition it is urgently needed that modern India initiates a healthy dialogue with her own living past, relive and renew it, and in the process rediscover what authentic living means. Apart from its healthy attitude to tradition there is very little in hermeneutics that interests me. I am rather worried over the possible negative impact of it on the type of philosophy I practice and advocate and on the general conception of philosophy I hold to be valid.

I would like to add, by way of introduction, a ward of warning. For reasons stated above I cannot be and I am not indifferent to hermeneutics; nevertheless I have no claim to any expertise in the field. Besides, given my training and persuasion I find even greater difficulty than Stegmuller[2] who listed and discussed "a number of difficulties that a logician encounters when he attempts to deal with the hermeneutic literature".[3] I almost agree with what he writes, with reference to the alleged hermeneutic circle of understanding.[4]

II

The great urge being displayed nowadays by some thinkers in the philosophical fraternity in India to convince themselves and others that there is or has been such a thing called philosophical hermeneutics in our country seems to me to be misdirected, misguided or misleading. I am not immediately interested in the factual question. What interests me most is *why* some people feel such an urge or anxiety? Lest others should fail to appreciate my anxiety about their anxiety let me explain my case. I believe that it is both wrong and non-commendable to think that any absence is a deficiency.[5] So as a general principle one should not try hard to find in one's own culture whatever one finds elsewhere. It is often more rewarding to ask and answer the question why something is not there[6] rather than over jealously identifying here and there certain similarities, often superficial, and build on them the case that we too have or had what others have. There are cultural determinants why certain trands of thought or issues emerge or do not emerge in a certain culture. Therefore, some people think that it is a good question, "Why modern scientific revolution or modern science did not develop in India or in the East?" By the same logic or absence of it some people think it to be a good question to ask "Why so many major religions emerged in the East and not in the West"? It seems that if these questions are to be answered at all then reference must be made to the relevant cultural determinants. Once we could identify these we could gain sharper insight, and discover that due to differences in their cultural determinants apparently similar doctrines of different cultures were fundamentally different at the deeper level.

Nearly over a century Indian philosophers spent best of their energy in studying Hegel, Bradley and Kant and searching for similarities (and dissimilarities) between their thought and those of the Indian philosophers like the Vedantin-s. It was effectively checked when at about 1960s T.R.V. Murty in his presidential address in the annual session of the Indian Philosophical Congress referred to this trend, and urged us to shift our attention to some new area. He suggested philosophy of language. Within a few years there was a great spurt in research in this area. Some of my colleagues and I too got interested in this area without any knowledge of the call by Murty. At that time also I raised, and tried to answer, in my own way, the question regarding availability of philosophy of language in India. Today, I ask the similar question: "Do or did the necessary cultural determinants obtain in India to make it possible for hermeneutics to develop here?" Any serious answer to this question requires us to be clear and definite about the meaning of the expression "hermeneutics". It will not do simply to refer to the dictionary meaning of it, as people sometimes do. What is necessary in our context is to remember that the expression belongs to certain evolving philosophical culture in which it has its own history and associations. Those who manage to forget this are ill-equipped to handle the much larger and complicated issue of interpretation. With any such person the inquiry whether we have hermeneutics in India is a nonstarter.

In short, I find many, who claim that certain classical system of thought in India is an example of hermeneutical enterprise, but do not explain to my satisfaction what particular feature or features of this school of thought incline them to make such a claim. They often end by showing that in the designated school of thought in particular or in the philosophical schools of India in general there had been a long tradition of text interpretation. If fact, different philosophical schools of thought in India developed through direct and indirect commentaries on some single text with which the respective school is believed to start. But any interpretation is not hermeneutics. At the one end the word interpretation is an ordinary word of English language and at another end it is a technical concept of certain system of thought that is furthest removed from hermeneutics. But by referring to a dictionary of English language we cannot discover that sense of it which makes interpretation a key concept in hermeneutics so much so that hermeneutics has been even sought to be defined as "the theory and practice of interpretation". For such a description to be valid and understood by us we need to know the intended sense of the term; and for that we need to refer to the historical origin of both the term and the (hermeneutic) movement. Besides, we must refer to the actual uses to which the term or the concept has been put in hermeneutical enterprise and literature. The other discipline in which interpretation, albeit in a different sense, is a key concept is formal semantics – one of the three major schools of contemporary analytical philosophy of language and meaning. Philosophers of this school have made famous the terms like interpretation, radical interpretation, principle of charity, etc. In short, before we start finding the presence of hermeneutics in India or hermeneutic practices in the work of some classical schools of Indian philosophy, we should be clear about the sense the term interpretation has in the context of hermeneutics. To find hermeneutics in some old works of Indian philosophy is not practicing hermeneutics or hermeneutic interpretation. This is not to deny that there is enough scope for us to practice authentic hermeneutical interpretation.

III

The expression hermeneutics, derived from the Greek *hermeneutika,* originally means "message analysis". Message is here the thing for interpreting; it is to be arrived at or discovered through interpretation. Unfortunately, the reference to message or the significance of it is often overlooked when we talk today about interpretation and hermeneutics. We will return to this at the end of this paper. In the medieval period hermeneutics did not stand for radical relativism. It did not mean or consist only in producing interpretations of scriptures just for understanding them in one's own way. There were definite questions to solve and fixed number of alternatives to choose from. The very serious question was who had the authority to interpret the scriptures. Unauthorized interpretations differing from the authorized one led to "heresies, schism, persecutions, wars, etc." Such controversies or interpretations were not open-ended. There were clear-cut alternatives. For the later Catholics, the authority was solely with Pope, but earlier it was with Church Councils. It has been noted that orthodox Islam granted everyone the right to interpret the Quran, but according to the Shia sect, only the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad had the authority. Without losing its link with religion and scripture the scope of hermeneutics was enlarged – from analysis of Bible to analysis of text – during the emergence of renaissance humanism of fourteenth century and a little later when the new humanist education or humanities was initiated. It is during this time that hermeneutics came to mean a historical and critical methodology for analyzing texts. Using this method the Italian humanist Lorenzo Valla proved for the first time in 1440 that Donation of Constantine was a fake – a forgery committed by the Church. So it does not seem to be entirely correct to say that "In the nineteenth century, due primarily to the work of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the scope of hermeneutics was broadened to encompass humanistic and historical inquiry". Be that as it may, it is fair to say that philosophical hermeneutics was not there before twentieth century. And even in this century, at least, in the first half of it, Hermeneutics was never a part of the mainstream Anglo-American or European philosophy[7]. Almost from the time it was inaugurated by Descartes (and Bacon), and till during the time of contemporary analytic philosophers (modern), philosophy has been in close connection with science with its emphasis on fact, truth and rigorous thinking. From the point of view of philosophers of this tradition "hermeneutics has been taken ... to represent just the sort of wooly thinking that should be rejected and eliminated".[8]

Philosophical hermeneutics emerged as a powerful continental critique of science and science dominated philosophy. In this aspect of it, it is closely allied to deconstruction and its successor post-modernism. For indeed "the most conspicuous exponents of deconstruction, or its successor, 'postmodernism', are either uninterested [in] or positively hostile to science".[9] It is no wonder that hermeneutics is viewed today as inseparably connected with postmodernism and deconstructionism. Now the modernity – the cast of mind shaped by science and philosophy as essentially aligned with it – or hostility to it is among the determinants that ensured the emergence of philosophical hermeneutics in the continent. We may as well say, and this is actually said by people who know best, that twentieth century philosophical hermeneutics is the continental critique of modern European scientific culture including the scientific ideology and modern philosophy. Thus, hermeneutics is so closely associated in our mind with the deconstruction of modernity. Even before we elaborate a little on this essential aspect of philosophical hermeneutics of today it is clear that if hermeneutics means all this then it did not and could not have developed in classical or modern India.

Philosophical hermeneutics developed in the West as a successor of modern science and modern philosophy. To be more precise, it is a successor there of epistemology and what succeeded it, namely the analytical philosophy of language. Thus, epistemology, philosophy of language, and their relation are integral part of the theoretical culture of modern West, and cannot be extrapolated easily elsewhere. Any student of history of Western philosophy knows about the close relationship between modern (Western) science and epistemology. The reason why modern philosophy began as epistemology and what epistemology came to mean are deeply rooted in the history of modern West. When modern science developed in the Christianized West, dominated at the time by the Christian religion, the then society was not ready to accept the new science as knowledge. Philosophy originated to make the then society safe for the scientists and their science. It could be done through the successful formulation and execution of the project of defining knowledge and determining its, scope, means, etc., in such a way that science alone could count as (proper) knowledge. This involved the examination, from a neutral position, all the different forms of alleged knowledge and judging, by some neutral single and fixed criterion, what is proper knowledge. History determined it to be a modern problem and project, which did not exist before; for, there did not exist the context for their appearance. Therefore, Descartes is rightly celebrated as the father of modern philosophy. But we are not always aware of the exact significance of the epithet modern or of the historical context or reason of the origin of epistemology. Modern does not mean only a certain period of human history. It is very superficial to understand by modern philosophy the philosophy that developed in the seventeenth century along with (modern) science. It is a subject invented in the interest of science – to make the then society accept new science. So far this science set for philosophy a new problem to be solved, a goal to be achieved. This problem is the problem of knowledge. This is the reason why modern philosophy started mainly as epistemology and why this epistemology is described again and again by men like Quine as first philosophy. Not all this may be as clear and important for us as for those who are part of modern Western culture or are born and brought up in it. It is, therefore, quite natural for, say

Dummett, to correctly grasp the important aspect of the evolving (mainstream) philosophy of the West. "The most far-reaching part of Descartes' revolution was to make epistemology the most basic sector of the whole of philosophy: the whole subject had to start from the question, 'What do we know and how'? It is this orientation which makes post-Cartesian philosophy so different from that of the scholastics, for whom epistemology, in so far as they considered it at all, was no more than a sidestream".[10]

Kant, who died in early nineteenth century, brought to a close this project of founding science by successfully resolving, in favour of science, the question: "What is knowledge"? He practically equated knowledge with synthetic a priori judgment, which was available only in science. The totality of knowledge (proper) is science, and his first *Critique,* he claims, discovers all the principles of synthetic a priori judgment. Either because the project of epistemology was over or becuase it was found to be totally misconceived, epistemology was superseded by its successor, a new branch of philosophy – the philosophy of language and meaning, sometimes referred to by the expression "philosophical logic".[11] Now if epistemology, in the standard sense, emerged in the West in the seventeenth century with Descartes, then philosophy of language, again in its standard sense, originated in that part of the world with Frege (1848-1925). The history of the evolving theoretical culture in question facilitated their growth and order of origin. And this history is very much different from the history of the evolution of Indian thought.

To make a long story short, though the contemporary analytic philosophers, including those of the field of philosophy of language, were unanimous that philosophy of language should take the place that epistemology held for more than two centuries, their attitude to these two branches of philosophy was not necessarily the same. Whereas Frege did not find anything essentially wrong in the Cartesian project of epistemology excepting that it did not actually had the right to the central position given to it in philosophy, Quine and Rorty were certain that the project itself was essentially misconceived. The situation is much more complicated. This realization led Quine to opt for naturalized epistemology and meaning holism while it led Rorty close to hermeneutics (There are good reasons to believe, however that the description of their philosophical position that has the chance of getting their ready approval is pragmatism stemming from Dewey and Peirce). Hermeneutics, the continental movement of thought, was opposed to both classical epistemology and standard analytical philosophy of language, and in fact, against the entire ideology of science for the same reason. Its opposition to all these three related fields stems from its opposition to foundationalism. Even if Quine's repeated reference to Neurath's plank-by-plank methodology was a clear expression of his disapproval of the myth of the first philosophy and the Archimedean point, he was not a committed relativist in spite of his thesis that any truth is revisable in principle. Frege, on the other hand, strongly believed that “philosophy has a foundation”. In fact, modernity as a whole is that cast of mind that endorses foundationalism, and believes in the objectivity, truth, fact, knowledge, justification and so on. This mentality received its first rude shock in 1962 when Thomas Kuhn published his *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* and initiated what is known as crisis of rationality.

Philosophical hermeneutics and deconstructionism, in their somewhat different ways,[12] are concerted efforts to replace this foundationalist ideology – the ideology of science and science dominated philosophy that are so central to modernity – by another one – one of open-ended, unconstrained “‘theory’ and ‘practice’ of interpretation”. The idea briefly is this. Foundationalists in epistemology begin with their strong belief in the given. Rationalist foundationalists of classical epistemology like Descartes believe that there are self-evidently true first principles of demonstration, and certain and infallible pieces of knowledge, which act as *foundation* upon which (the rest) of our system of knowledge is constructed. And if no mistake is committed in such construction – and epistemology may enlighten us about how to do that – we can have subsequently also certainty and fully objective truths. This ensures that we can know the reality as it actually is. The position of the empiricist foundationalists of classical epistemology is not essentially different. For them, however, what constituted the foundation was the sense-given and not thought-given. Though some empiricists accepted self-evident or demonstrative truths to which class Hume included even geometry, the standard view of the foundationalist empiricists is that sense experience itself provides the foundation or starting point on or from which the entire body of knowledge is constructed. Opposition to foundationalism does not come solely from hermeneutics. We know that there are many, even among epistemologists themselves and contemporary analytic philosophers of language and logic, who are strongly opposed to foundationalism. But they do not draw the consequences of the rejection of foundationalism exactly along the way the hermeneuticists do. Even outside hermeneutics, anti-foundationalists came to the conclusion that we cannot have absolute certainty or fully objective truth that can give us access to objective reality, reality as it is. Even Kant was not a foundationalist in this sense. Anyway, the foundationalists were led to believe in such truths and reality by their faith in the myth of the given and of the Archimedean point. Whoever rejected these myths "positively rejected the possibility of any kind of objective truth". Even outside hermeneutics there was a breakdown of the sharp separation between the given and the interpretation, or between observation and theory. Thus, the belief we meet in hermeneutics, that "'Reality' is only accessible to us in terms of how we understand and interpret it", reflects the general mood of the majority of mainstream contemporary analytic philosophers as well. To illustrate the point with an example randomly chosen. During a discussion on philosophy of language between Bryan Magee and John Searle it came to be agreed that "I couldn't even have the experience of seeing a glass of water without some linguistic equipment. Thus, language helps to create the very categories in which we experience the world". "The world doesn't come to us already sliced up into objects and experiences: what counts as an object is already a function of our system of representation, and how we perceive the world in our experiences is influenced by that system of representation. ... On my view, the world divides the way *we* divide it, and our main way of dividing things up is in language. Our concept of reality is a matter of our linguistic categories".[13]

Hermeneutics goes a little further, and here precisely it lands into difficulty. But first, what more is there in the hermeneutic rejection of foundationalism? A very succinct exposition for our purpose is the following. "Thus if there is no 'reality' to be independently compared with our knowledge, all we can do is oppose one interpretation to another, and each of these is ultimately going to be as well motivated by the 'facts' as any other". This, we shall find later, is going a bit too far. This is all about objectivity and truth. What about knowledge? Since there is no foundation of our knowledge, according to the hermeneuticists (and all anti-foundationalists as well), how does our knowledge begin? Well, it begins with previous knowledge which in no fundamental way is different from the present knowledge. But what is to count as previous knowledge? "Why, just whatever it was that *we thought* we knew, before whatever happened that changed our minds? And if there is no certainty to knowledge, and no permanent, fixed system can be constructed, then the new knowledge will be what we think we know until something else happens to change our minds again". This position has two implications: Firstly, it amounts to the approach described by the phrase 'everything goes' and secondly, it leads to what is known as the hermeneutic circle of understanding. I want to identify for discussion a little later these two features of hermeneutics that if there is no independent reality to be known and if knowledge is not possible then what remains of our intellectual enterprise. The task is to understand. Quest of knowledge is to be replaced by ceaseless effort to understand. "Hermeneutics is about interpretation, which is about *meaning*, which is about what is *understood*. Foundationalism is about reality, which is about *truth*, which is about what is *known*". But what is there to understand? Ever evolving and ever changing world and our style of life on the one hand, and the text in which these are enshrined. Such understanding is not a serial and cumulative process; it is essentially circular.

So far we have discussed hermeneutics as a critique of classical foundationalist epistemology or for that matter, modern philosophy and modern science. But it will be wrong to think that this opposition ends in proposing an alternative model of theoretical inquiry; theory of interpretation to theory of knowledge. This takes us to the second important feature of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is opposed to theory or episteme. Its emphasis is on praxis and application. And in this also hermeneutics is true to the humanist programme of going back to the old and searching and interpreting tradition. For, this emphasis on praxis is the legacy not of the medieval culture but Greek culture or, to be more precise, it is the legacy of Aristotelian practical reason. It is the practice of interpretation. It may not be possible, for want of space, to discuss this point in detail even though the emphasis on application in the further elaboration of the notion of hermeneutics suggests a deeper affinity between classical philosophies of Greece and India.

IV

Let us now turn towards, if not hermeneutics, at least the indications of hermeneutics in India. Those who nowadays show great urge in discovering hermeneutics in India never clearly say anything deep or clear by way of founding their hope. For example, they do not say, by way of founding their hope, what features of hermeneutics they take to be central or what, according to them, are the chief associations that the term has in its standard use. This, however, amounts to violating, at the initial stage, the very spirit of hermeneutics. It is inauthentic and unwarranted to detach a particular thought or expression from the culture or tradition to which it belongs and in which it originated. Both the terms 'hermeneutics' and the 'discipline' of thought, which goes by that name have their historical origin, civilizational root, and definite role in the culture of the modern West. So one cannot easily, or at all, extrapolate them to the Indian context. Indeed India has a very long tradition of text interpretation. Similarly, India in general and Indian philosophy in particular are markedly and consciously rooted in tradition. We should also note that modern India has, in some quarters at least, strong opposition to science and scientism. However, all these features are to be properly analyzed and understood. If, without doing that, we jump to the conclusion that India had or has developed hermeneutics then that would be to indulge in facile comparison and oversimplification.

I would like to begin with the last one – opposition to science. Continental advocates of philosophical hermeneutics are opposed to the modern science that developed after the European renaissance, just as the then Christian religion was opposed to this emerging science. One of the central characteristics of hermeneutics is then that it bears essential reference to modern European science that developed there in the seventeenth century. Obviously, there could not develop in pre-seventeenth century India (or anywhere else) any opposition to this science. We have no cogent proof that India or her religion ever developed any opposition to her own science, science she developed independently, which was quite living until the twelfth-thirteenth century.[14] Efforts of some modern and politically motivated Indian scholars to highlight the negative influence of Hindu religion on or its opposition to Indian science are, to say the least, far less than convincing.[15] What is more important is that these scholars construe the opposition in question in the image of Christian religion opposing in the sixteenth century the emerging modern Western science with the suggestion that religion there, so also here, acted as reactionary force against real progress. But in the context of hermeneutics the opposition in question is very different. It is the opposition to science in the name of tradition by thinkers committed to both opposing science and dialogical engagement with tradition. So before over enthusiastically extrapolating hermeneutics-science opposition from the modern West and imagining that we have indication of hermeneutics in the imagined science-religion (Hinduism) conflict one needs to understand where does hermeneutics locate the opposition between science and tradition, What is there in science where hermeneuticists discover disowning or falsification of tradition? Modernity and the modern science that shaped it are committed to objectivism. This does not enable them to acknowledge or recognize, according to the hermeneuticists, the importance and role of tradition. Some may go further and say that the ideology of objectivism leads science to belie its own history, at least humanism. Renaissance humanism while opposing medievalism and urging a return to classical culture[16] "can be considered one of the conditions that contributed to the birth of modern science".[17] Yet science as it developed violated some of the important agenda of humanism. To take just two examples, Firstly, in humanism we detect a shift of interest from the *theoretical* urgency and systematic rigour of scholasticism of the middle age to more vital *practical* concerns of man in society. Modern science and scientific culture with its importance to theory appears to have lapsed into medieval orientation. By contrast, hermeneutics is true to the humanistic and Aristotelian legacy of the orientation according to which *phronesis* (not to confuse with just *techne*) has precedence over *theoria*. Secondly, science did not live up to the naturalism of humanism that emphasized taking man not only as primarily a doer rather than knower but as a concrete and natural, corporeal, sensuous being rather than an abstract ahistorical rational (theoretically speaking) being. Hermeneutics emphasizes the essential historicity and temporality of man. Man is rooted in his own historical culture that shapes his perceptions, actions, imagination, aspirations, and in fact, every aspect of him. Objectivism of science implies that man is a *tabula rasa*. He is *not* born with a huge cultural legacy determining and colouring not only how he looks at the world but also the world itself. Rather, there is an objective world to which man is related as a spectator. Hermeneuticists hold that such a man is the product of the ideology of science and is nowhere to be found in the actual world. So hermeneutics implies that all the basic concepts of science – fact, knowledge, truth and the given – are myths. It further follows that hermeneutics denies all that epistemology spent centuries to secure. It is, therefore, opposed to the very core of modern philosophy. Philosophical corollary of objectivism of science is epistemological foundationalism. So it is not only the case that philosophical hermeneutics developed in the continent after epistemology and philosophy of language, but it developed in opposition to them. At its foundation is the hope that the space created by the death of epistemology will not be filled.

This, in short, is the nature of the opposition to modern science and philosophy that is constitutive of hermeneutics as the term is standardly understood and used by noted scholars of the field. I will leave it to readers to work out for themselves if there was or is in India such cultural determinants to allow us to say that we have discovered, if not hermeneutics, at least, indications of hermeneutics in India. There remains one further question. What is then the nature of the opposition to Western science that comes from some people of modern India including those who are, and consciously so, without arrogance or apology, tradition-bound? However, we need first to turn to the theme of interpretation.

India has a very long and old tradition of text interpretation. But is that enough to allow us to conclude that we too had or have hermeneutics? We need, first, to note the nature, context and consequence of hermeneutic interpretation. Hermeneutic interpretation itself is a direct consequence of failure of epistemology or foundationalism. The tradition of text interpretation in India was not informed by the same or similar phenomenon or, what is the same thing, opposition to foundationalism. The consequence of committing oneself to this sort of interpretation, hermeneutic interpretation, is to land in what is widely known as the hermeneutic circle of understanding. In the context of hermeneutics the word interpretation has all these associations determined by the history of its origin and the culture to which it belongs. Without going deeply into these we are not warranted to extrapolate interpretation or hermeneutics from its original setting to the Indian context. We also need to note carefully the diversity of actual or possible attitudes to the phenomenon called the circle of understanding, which distinguishes cultures, and sometimes sub-cultures within a single culture, in a significant way.

It is clear from what has already been said that we cannot hope to understand hermeneutic interpretation if we take the word interpretation as an ordinary word of English language. It is not also the same as interpretation in any technical sense. I will cite one example from the field of contemporary analytical philosophy of language. This I will do particularly for two reasons. First, continental philosophical hermeneutics is a successor of this philosophy of language just as it succeeds epistemology. Second, interpretation and radical interpretation are centrally important topics in this form of philosophy of language, and here also it leads to (another) circle of understanding.[18] Hermeneutic interpretation, however, is to be distinguished from this other interpretation – the one we meet in the context of a particular school of contemporary philosophy of language. It may finally turn out that interpretation in the tradition of India is different in important ways from interpretation as it is understood and practiced either in hermeneutics or in contemporary philosophy of language.

Hermeneutics is rooted in the rejection of epistemological foundationalism of any form and variety including the alternative versions offered respectively by the rationalists, empiricists and intuitionists. It denies that we have any indubitable given – in thought or in sense experience – the absolute beginning or starting point of knowledge such that the rest of the entire system of knowledge could be constructed on its basis rigorously to fulfill the dream of finding and founding absolutely objective and certain knowledge. Knowledge, so conceived, would be thorougly determined by fact and would not only be absolutely true but would admit no alternatives. This belief in independent fact, unbiased observation or experience of facts, uncontaminated by theory, a spectator, seeing and judging from a neutral point – all these presuppose the postulation of mind as a *tabula rasa*. On the one hand, these are the implications of objectivism and foundationalism of science, which in its turn is informed by the enlightenment legacy of prejudice against prejudice. Hermeneutics is committed to challenge and reject this second prejudice. It not only celebrates relativism but also gives an ontological anchoring to human prejudices in the doctrine of prejudice structure or fore-structure of human mind.

I have no time here to explain and examine in detail a related view that the challenge to objectivism and foundationalism also came independently from within science or at least history and philosophy of science around 1960; and this is taken to strengthen hermeneutics in its central role as the critique of modernity and of modern science. The fact of the matter is that it is an over interpretation of the central thesis of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* published in 1962. In this book, coming after the failure and death of logical positivism, Kuhn presented an alternative vision of science – alternative to the view of the standard modernist or classical foundationalist epistemology. According to this vision, there is nothing absolute and fixed in science or scientific knowledge. This by itself is not anything unique to Kuhnian vision. Many others, including scientists and philosophers of science, who would not go all the way with Kuhn, also believe firmly that science does not give absolute and unchanging truths. Quine, for example, holds that every proposition of science can be revised. What, however, is new in Kuhn's vision is how science changes. We cannot refer to or use facts to judge scientific theories. A scientific theory is changed or rejected not through confrontation with alternative theory proved true by the evidence of hard facts, but by change of paradigm, "by social struggle between contending interpretations of intrinsically ambiguous evidence of facts". We have reason to believe and we can cite *facts* from history of science to show that Kuhn here underestimates the role of fact and factual evidence and overstates the relevance and importance of the tradition of scientific practice. But that is not very important for our present purpose. What is important is to note that Kuhn hardly ever speaks, in his book, of truth as the concern of science, but "the new hermeneuticists positively rejected any kind of objective truth".[19] Again, depending on the sense in which the term objective is used, there are other groups who denied objective truth or knowledge. Be that as it may, the question is: "How does this rejection of objective knowledge relate to the two themes of interpretation and circle of understanding"? What the hermeneuticist replaces objective knowledge by is interpretation. If there is no objective truth then all is interpretation. "'Reality' is only accessible to us in terms of how we understand and interpret it. Thus, if there is no 'reality' to be independently compared with our knowledge, all we can do is oppose one interpretation to another, and each of these is ultimately going to be as well motivated by the 'facts' as any other. There are no foundational pieces of knowledge".[20] This is the nature and origin of hermeneutic interpretation. I wonder if those who have shown great urge in arguing in favour of the claim that India has hermeneutics on the ground that she has a long tradition of interpretation, have succeeded in locating such interpretation in Indian culture and if not, can they still say that India had or has her own philosophical hermeneutics?

How the theme of interpretation relates to the two other themes of tradition and circle of understanding is still not sufficiently clear. Briefly speaking, the relation is this. Since they rejected the given as the foundation or starting point of knowledge the hermeneuticists are under the obligation to answer the question: With which or from where does it start then? The answer the hermeneuticists would provide is, "with previous knowledge ... But what is to count as previous knowledge? ... just whatever it was that we thought we knew before whatever happened that changed our minds. And if there is no certainty to knowledge, and no permanent, fixed system can be constructed, then the new knowledge will be what we think we know until something else *happens* to change our minds again". But where is here interpretation or circle of understanding? The point is, what happens by way of changing of mind is presumably interpretation and through interpretation. For one good reason, knowledge at any given time is not to be taken as an abstract realm of thought or even some sentences taken as abstracted from their concrete setting including the hearer, speaker, speaker's intention and hearer's background knowledge, etc.[21] In one of its concrete forms, knowledge is embodied in or embedded in a text. The process of knowing is the process of interpreting a text.[22] But a text is not a finite collection of utterances or sentences abstracted from the concrete context of their origin; it is where the whole tradition or in whichever the tradition in question manifests itself – speech, art, lifestyle, etc., etc. – is enshrined. This view of knowledge as living text and tradition and interpretation as authentic engagement or dialogue with tradition are the sources of what is known as the hermeneutic circle. Habermas, at least, seems to have something like this in mind when he speaks of the difficulty of interpreting a text in his book *Knowledge and Interest*.[23] The point roughly is this. If an interpreter wants to interpret texts of the past – past eon – the knowledge of the lifestyle of the past epoch is needed for the purpose. But that lifestyle is irrevocably past and is not available or accessible to us independently of the text to be interpreted. ''So it is alleged that a circle is involved: from the texts handed down, the interpreter must infer the lifestyle of that era; but he needs, on the other hand, a knowledge of this lifestyle in order to understand the language of that era''.[24] We can go further and say that a text is differently understood by the interpreters depending on whether they belong to the same tradition to which the text belongs or to a different tradition. Hermeneuticists go still further and think that hermeneutics or hermeneutic interpretation ''is the process by which we return to a text, or to *the*[25] world, and derive a new interpretation – perhaps a new interpretation every time, or a new one for every interpreter. It is clear that it happens all the time. We can understand a book, a movie, etc., a little differently each time we read or see it''.[26] There is a subtle difference between the formulations of Habermas and Ross. For the present the interrelated thesis, or interrelated versions of the same thesis – the essential historicity of man, his being culturally rooted; the prejudice structure of human mind, absence of objective knowledge or independent world or fact – leave us with nothing but interpretation and the circle of understanding.

My misgivings about the claim that we have hermeneutics in India should be fairly clear now. Hermeneutics is a package of interrelated doctrines, claims and agenda. It is neither possible nor justified to abstract just one of them, say, interpretation, from the rest and equate it with hermeneutics. For then hermeneutics gets equated for all practical purposes with *any* interpretation. It is then a short job to arrive at, through such devious means, the conclusion that there was, is or may be started, hermeneutics in India. We have seen that hermeneutic interpretation is an inseparable part of hermeneutics as a late twentieth century continental critique of modern science and modernity as shaped by the ideology of this science. One characteristic central feature of this modernity and modern science is foundationalism. The postmodern and continental philosophical hermeneutics almost defines itself by its opposition to this foundationalism. What foundationalist epistemology is to modernity, interpretation is to hermeneutics. Interpretation replaces knowledge just as hermeneutics replaces epistemology and its successor, philosophy of language. The moot question we need to go into is whether classical or modern India developed or placed herself under the ideology of foundationalism. This is a very important and challenging question, and we hardly have enough time or space to adequately answer or even, what is needed for that, formulate or explain it. It would be unwise to answer the question straight away in the affirmative or negative. Rather, we should examine separately what component or components of foundationalism as the target of hermeneutic critique are included in or excluded from the perspective or approach that one can justly call Indian. Foundationalist thesis of *tabula rasa* or of absolutely neutral standpoint is certainly excluded.[27] According to the Indian view, the enterprise of knowledge or at least, philosophy is always from within a tradition. The supposed trans-tradition neutral point of view means, at a certain level, the stance of an uncommitted critic or freelance thinker, which is hardly ever really serious, sincere or creative; it hardly deserves serious attention or examination. In Indian culture, such a position is indefensible both rationally and morally. It cannot contribute anything fundamental to knowledge and culture. But just this rejection of the Archimedean point is not enough indication of presence of hermeneutics in classical India. For, there was no foundationalist science or epistemology the need to oppose which could necessitate the birth of hermeneutics. Classical India had her own science (and religion) but there was no evidence of the presence of any urge to oppose it in the way hermeneutics opposes modern science. It may mean either that the science in question was not foundationalist or that foundationalism was not considered to be objectionable or both. It is not easy to decide which alternative or alternatives actually obtained because not much, if at all, discussion on the philosophy of science is either extant or was produced in India. The case is not hopeless either. For extant literature on epistemology is reasonably adequate. Moreover, even in the European context epistemology has been for a long time, and much before philosophy of science developed as a separate discipline, the source of information about the ideology of current science. We need to explore classical epistemology, it seems, if we are to find an answer why in the classical period there did not develop in India hermeneutics in the sense of critique of (foundationalist) science or epistemology. It may seem quite extraordinary to expect such a critique in the classical period itself. If it were there then the type of science in question could not develop there and the critique in its turn would have no excuse for its existence or development either. The right question to ask is, whether modern India (or 'postmodern India', if such a thing is there) developed the sort of critique or hermeneutics of indigenous science of her classical or premodern period and if not why not. In the specified sense, hermeneutics had a chance to develop in modern India and never in classical India. However, modern India could not do so. For one thing modern India (greater section of its educated population even) lacked necessary interest and knowledge of the indigenous science of the classical period. Even if that science was of the right sort, modern India could not, therefore, initiate a hermeneutical critique, as she actually did not. Still modern India did have indeed before her a foundationalist science and epistemology, to critique. It is the same modern European science, which the continental thinkers of postmodern period found unacceptable not so much as a set of doctrines but as a distinct ideology of modernity. If modern India could develop (she actually did not develop) hermeneutical critique of this ideology of science, the hermeneutics in question would not be any other than the continental hermeneutics. It is a borrowed critique against a borrowed science. That Indian modernity is a borrowed modernity is already sufficiently exposed.[28] Modern India's attitude to European modernity and modern science and culture has been one of docile acceptance.[29] The question of producing a critique of it on her part simply did not arise. India, therefore, has not ever started her career in postmodernism. Modern India is either a culture of largely forgotten classicism or a largely uniform critique of this indigenous classicism or of borrowed modernity. Where is there any scope for hermeneutics here? It is no wonder that in contemporary India scholars having interest and expertise in hermeneutics hardly ever discuss or write anything that shows their awareness of the fact that hermeneutics is basically a critique of modern science and epistemology aligned with it. Howevermuch they may think that their writings are contributions to the field of hermeneutics these lack the basic hermeneutic orientation. We may mimic the authentic hermeneuticists of the West but we are not doing hermeneutics, nor can we show to any discerning scholar that there is any such thing as hermeneutics, in the standard sense, in classical, modern or contemporary India. In short, one very powerful indication of hermeneutics – launching powerful critique of the ideology of modern science – is totally absent from India.

But could we not find some indication of presence of hermeneutics in classical epistemology of India? Let us first be clear about what it could mean. It would be possible if we could show either that India's classical epistemology was anti-foundationalist or that it was foundationalist epistemology. If the first were true we could argue that there was a basic affinity between India's approaches to science and knowledge and those of hermeneutics. So even if hermeneutics did not develop actually or by name in India there was strong indication of its potential presence. If anti-foundationalism were there in India then we could profitably study it for some new arguments and insights that could further strengthen continental hermeneutics. This would initiate in modern India today genuine hermeneutical enterprise, in the standard sense of the term, along the line of her own thinking. In the process, we could ensure genuine Indian contribution to world literature of hermeneutics. If, on the other hand, classical epistemology of India is foundationalist epistemology then contemporary Indians could launch criticism of it utilizing, among other things, the resources of continental hermeneutics and could lay the foundation of intercultural hermeneutic movement. That would be to found Indian hermeneutics in the accepted sense of the term. The second course seems to be prospective. For, looking at India's classical epistemology one is most likely to have the impression that it is foundationalist with its commitment to certitude in knowledge. On the other hand, as shown above, modern Indians largely lack motivation to oppose modern science or the foundationalist epistemology aligned with it.

More importantly, a careful examination and authentic understanding of the classical Indian epistemology would reveal that India never developed any craze for absolutism nor did she lapse into relativism. Neither in practice nor in theory did she betray any weakness in favour of absolute truth admitting no exception or alternative. She was not seized by the ideal of absolute certitude in knowledge. But, for all that, she was far from courting the ideology of the relativists: anything goes. Two questions arise here. First, is any third position between absolutism and relativism possible? Do these alternatives keep any space in between? The second question is, if there is a third position what is it? The answer to the first question is in the affirmative and to the second, the answer is realism or Indian realism at any rate. This realism received best and most elaborate formulation in the school of classical Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy. It may be objected that the realism of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika or even Mīmāṁsā schools cannot be taken as representative of Indian thought or mind. The reason in the first place is that India developed powerful schools of idealist philosophies; secondly, India did not develop any inclination towards essentializing tendency. In response, we would like to point out that even in her schools of idealist metaphysics rarely, if ever, one meets idealistic epistemology. Either these schools did not develop any separate epistemology of their own and managed with epistemology borrowed from some school of realism (may be with some modification), or the epistemology they developed was some form of realism. What is so characteristic about this realism is its association with two facets of Indian culture that did not allow absolutism or foundationalism to develop here. Indian culture did not keep any room for the doctrine like *tabula rasa.* And India never showed any sign of great worry about the presence of multiple conflicting sub-cultures; nor was there any great urge to resolve the conflict. It happily remained witness to individuals carrying on their enterprise of knowledge or philosophy from within their respective culture of choice but never from a vantage position of a trans-tradition and neutral spectator. Europe, unlike India, is a place of monolithic culture. It is either *the* culture of science or it is *the* culture of opposition to science, that is to say, of hermeneutics. For one who consciously or as a matter of sheer habit of thought aligns himself with the creed of monolithic culture would jump to the conclusion that since it is not absolutist epistemology, Indian epistemology must be a form of relativism. Many, on the other hand, would feel inclined to argue that Indian epistemology is oriented towards the certitude of knowledge. They would argue that the display of eagerness to ensure certainty by Indian epistemologists shows that they are not relativists and again, by the creed of monolithic culture India must be absolutist or foundationalist. We have shown on many previous occasions that in spite of the great urge for definitive knowledge, India never encouraged absolutism or monolithic approach. An epistemology that is committed to definitive knowledge, but steers clear of both absolutism and relativism is a different variety of realism. It is an in-between position and may be described as optimalism. What distinguishes this form of realism is that in spite of the great value and importance it places on factually determined truth and definitive knowledge, it strives for optimal universality that keeps room for exceptions and alternatives, openness and growth. A deeper study of otherwise the most complete and rigorous systems, and widely known as such, like Paninian linguistics and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika scheme of categories, will bear this out. A look into the structure and mechanisms of these systems shows that these are only optimally closed systems. Down the centuries, India has produced great creative and original thinkers who in their works are found to return time and again to text and tradition within which they carry out their enterprise of knowledge and interpretation. This rootedness in tradition, sober realism or optimalism and committed thinking give new meaning to rationality on the one hand and new orientation and meaning to enterprise of knowledge and interpretation on the other. Rejection of free lance and uncommitted thinking and thinking not within the scope created by the possibilities recognized and made available by the existing tradition, effectively checks proliferation of alternatives and the celebration of 'anything goes'. Therefore, while keeping distance from absolutism India did not lapse into relativism, she stayed protected within her special variety of realism or optimalism.

Again, because of her realism, India has never been in a mood to celebrate the circle of understanding. And if this shows that there is no prospect of hermeneutics to develop or find habitation in India this cannot be helped. Characteristic Indian response to the claim of the hermeneuticists that there is involved an inescapable circle in our enterprise of knowledge or humanities finds sober expression in the passage from Penrose we quoted at the beginning. It is also quite obvious, from what we have said above, that in spite of admitting that we are shaped by our tradition, India will not agree that this lands us, in our enterprise of knowledge, in an inescapable circle. She would hold, on the other hand, that either the talk about circle is not literal but only metaphorical or that if it is literally true then there cannot be any enterprise of knowledge or interpretation. In recent times, Stegmuller, after serious research in the matter, has concluded that what is described as circle is really a dilemma, and that too, is not really inescapable. He writes, "If the hermeneuticists advocating the thesis of the indestructibility of the hermeneutic circle mean *that this dilemma cannot be overcome*, then what might be inferred from this is not that there exists something which pertains specifically to the kind of knowledge obtainable in the Humanities, but simply that all disciplines which are affected by this dilemma should just fold up since theirs is a hopeless undertaking".[30] Many, like Kelly L. Ross, who are convinced that there is no circle literally speaking, prefer to use the concept or imagery of cycle instead, in presenting the position of the hermeneuticists. And it is always a cycle that describes rightly the

Indian realist's conception of how knowledge progresses within the bounds of tradition. Even so, Indian realism, be that Mīmāṁsā or Nyāya realism, should not be confused with hermeneutics. For hermeneutic cycle of understanding shows that interpretation spirals out ever widely into unmanageable length and variety. For, "there is no *constraint* in reality on interpretation"; "Since there is no 'reality' independent of interpretation, the Universe is, at any time, what you say it is". And the text, the tradition or evidence or datum imposes no restriction or control over interpretation. Such extreme relativism does not necessarily follow, as the example of Indian realism shows, from the rejection of objectivism, absolutism or foundationalism. The fact is that though usually a number of interpretations of any text, tradition or empirical datum are possible yet, beyond a certain limit, these very texts, etc., impose certain restriction on interpretation. The line between exposition, reconstruction, interpretation and distortion may not be fixed but it is there. One may find Bernstein's very sympathetic and competent presentation of hermeneutics as compromising on basic principle of hermeneutics, but it can hardly be mistaken for, say, a comic strip. What all these come to is that there is always a range of options for an interpreter as otherwise interpretation is a nonstarter. "If the range of hermeneutic interpretation is limited by a text, or by empirical evidence, or by anything else, then it is possible for the hermeneutic cycle to narrow down instead of spiraling out of control. The 'limit' of the spiral, whether it is reached or not, is the principle of objectivity and reality. As in quantum mechanics itself, there can be a larger or smaller range of uncertainty, but that will be merely a range, not an unconstrained infinity of possibilities. Indeed, the theoretical possibility that an infinite number of scientific theories could explain the same 'facts' runs up against the hard reality that the theoreticians of these possibilities rarely can propose even one new theory that would take all the relevant facts into consideration" So the realistic hermeneutic cycle will always look like the Figure 1 and official hermeneutic cycle like Figure 2.

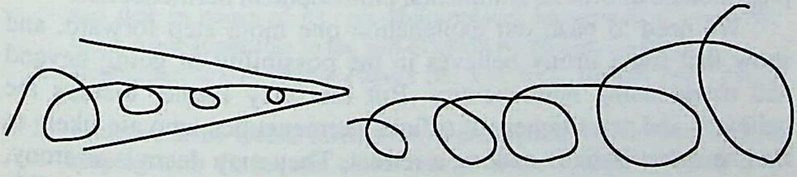

Fig. 1 & 2

This is made possible by the fact that just as our enterprise of knowledge and interpretation works within the limits of a range of possibilities made available by the tradition so also tradition operates within limits imposed by nature of facts. Thus, transparency of knowledge and language or independence of fact cannot be violated by tradition.[31] It needs to be carefully studied, understood and explained how Indian realism maintains its internal consistency while admitting at the same time the active role tradition plays, objectivity of meaning and truth, multiplicity (within a range of approaching limit) of interpretations, etc. Emergence and continuation of multiplicity of philosophies within the same Vaidika tradition shows that India believes in the possibility and freedom of alternative interpretations. At the same time India developed – meticulously worked out and explicity articulated – a *common* methodology of interpretation and a *common* logic of various forms of dialogue. Besides, down the centuries there continued in classical India (this is still continuing in a diminutive form) unhindered, serious and sincere dialogues between different schools of thought and interpretations. All these show that India, from the earliest time, committed herself to believing in the unity of the Vaidika tradition in spite of a rich variety of alternative interpretations. It is not to be viewed as showing that a tradition is nothing but an infinite number of disparate interpretations of "it". On the other hand, it should be viewed as the tradition's owning up a number of interpretations as its interpretations, and thereby turning the otherwise disparate interpretations into a finite range of possibilities of interpretation, which through methodical dialogue is approaching the limit. This limit, again, may not be a geometrical point but an optimally narrow range of views – the limit of interpretations. The very fact that such a limit of interpretation is envisaged, as indicated by the belief and practice of dialogue, and a method for realising it is developed and used, shows that India's claim to have developed a hermeneutics is sustainable only if it is realistic hermeneutics. I, however, have grave doubt, whether this would make any clear sense to the practitioners of official continental philosophical hermeneutics.

We need to push our explanation one more step forward, and show that India firmly believes in the possibility of going beyond and transcending hermeneutics. But this may further dismay the believers and practitioners of official hermeneutics who are likely to find here that India is making a retreat. They may deem it an irony, an anti-climax. If, however, the said transcendence were not possible then all that we have been talking about, the limiting point of interpretation and attainment of it, would remain a dream, a vague utopia rather than a well founded reality. But it is precisely because to her these are reality that India firmly believes in this transcendence. This belief is firmly anchored in the common ontology of soul. Heidegger's ontological anchoring of prejudice structure gave the needed foundation to hermeneutics as an art of interpretation. But he or his successors could not, may be they did not want to also, provide any foundation to the hope that the enterprise of interpretation would ever reach a limit. Instead, they ensured that hermeneutic cycle is a process of ever spiraling out, with nothing to control or limit it. They feign celebrating this hermeneutic circle or cycle, or are they serious? India gives ontological anchoring to limit and final transcendence of alternatives in terms of essential nature of soul. If man and his 'mind', i.e., the *manas* cannot, man's soul can and does transcend prejudices and limitations that never allow us to believe in the existence of common truth beyond interpretations. Man is not essentially the body or even the *manas* but he is the soul or *ātmā*. In his essence man is ahistorical and atemporal. Men who have realized this position – men who not only *are*, and every man in his essence is, free but also realised that they are so, are the possessors and custodians of truth beyond interpretation. At this point we transcend hermeneutics. Indian culture is the single-minded pursuit of it.

References

1. Throughout this paper, I use, unless said or implied by the context otherwise, the term hermeneutics as short for philosophical hermeneutics. For one reason the works and activities of author's colleagues in question are inspired by the example and works of continental philosophical hermeneuticists. Secondly, very few among them have necessary training or equipment to venture into the field of theological or liturgical hermeneutics of Indian or European variety. K.S. Murty and his book *Vedic Hermeneutics: Śrutyarthaparyālocana* are rare exceptions. In this work there is no trace of philosophical hermeneutics; nor any discussion that even in the field of liturgical studies the word hermeneutics did not mean the same thing always; and that in some of its 'pre-philosophical hermeneutics' sense the word is not applicable to the sort of study we find in this book.
2. Stegmuller, W., *Collected Papers* etc. Vol. II, D. Reidel, 1977, pp. 2, 3.
3. There are some special reasons why I still agreed to write this paper in keeping with the request of the editors of the volume in which it is being published. I found in the request of the editors an opportunity to try to correct the feeling of disappointment, if not annoyance, I created in the audiance by the severely truncated presentation I had to make

on March 22 in connection with the seminar on "Language, Interpretation and Understanding: Hermeneutics from East-West Perspective", held at North Bengal University in the year 2005. I sounded quite negative about the prospect of hermeneutics in India. Here I state, what I could not do in that presentation, some of my reasons. Even here I leave out as much material as I wanted to include for want of space and time. This is all right for, and this is my second reason, I want to sensitize people about some matters of genuine concern and provoke the competent scholars and experts of the field to initiate serious discussion about them.

4. See Stegmuller, 1977, p. 2.
5. I have shown elsewhere that absences may be a mark, not of weakness or deficiency, but of strength and maturity. See author's "The Nyaya Theory of Consciousness" in *Science Philosophy Interface*, Vol. VI, 2002.
6. This emphasis on the study of the differences has a markedly hermeneutic note about it.
7. The first eight volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Paul Edwards (ed.) do not include any article on hermeneutics and the Index does not contain it as principal or sub heading.
8. Bernstein, R., *Philosophical Profiles,* Polity Press, 1986, p. 13.
9. For this and many other points I am indebted to the paper of Kelley Ross available on internet.
10. Dummett, M., *Frege, Philosophy of Language,* Duckworth, 1973, p. xv.
11. *Ibid.,* pp. 669, 670. See also Rorty, R., *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
12. Deconstruction, in the context of hermeneutics and in its original use by Heidegger, did not mean or involve destructive criticism.
13. Magee, B., (ed.) *Men of Ideas* etc., OUP, 1982, p. 156.
14. Cf. Bose, D.M., Sen, S.N. and Subbarayappa, B.V., (eds.), *A Concise History of Science in India,* INSA, New Delhi, especially, Chap. 11.
15. See author's "History of Science and Two Metamorphoses of Mind".
16. See Mazzio, J.A., *Renaissance and Revolution: The Remaking of The European Thought,* Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967, p. 14ff.
17. Edwards, P. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Vol. 4, p. 72.
18. For an exposition of this problem of circularity and its solution from the standpoint of a certain variety of Indian philosophy of language, see author's "Knowing at Secondhand" in the *International Journal of Communication,* Vol. V, Nos. 1 & 2, Bharati Publications, New Delhi, 1995.
19. Ross L. Kelley, "Foundationalism and Hermeneutics". Please search http://www.friesian.com/hermeneut.htm.
20. *Ibid.,* p. 2. It may be mentioned that it is also the conclusion of many of the contemporary philosophers of language that reality independent of language does not carry clear sense. The world is created by the

words we use to describe them. This is the non-transparency thesis of language originating somehow with Russell. See *Men of Ideas* etc., Magee, B. (ed.) for discussion with Searle.

21. One should not allow oneself to be misled by the insistence of hermeneuticists on texts to the exclusion of speaker, hearer or speaker's intention and the slogan 'not the meaning of the text but what the text says'.
22. One should not immediately jump to the conclusion that if this is all that is there in our enterprise of knowledge or can be expected from it then there cannot be progress or innovation. Such apprehension is based on inauthentic understanding of tradition and biased reading of history. For the former see author's Preface to his *Indian Realism* and for the latter see what Mazzio writes in connection with humanism in his book *Renaissance and Revolution, op.cit.*, p. 16.
23. p. 214.
24. Stegmuller, W., *Collected Papers*, Vol. II, p. 10.
25. Emphasis is added to suggest that strictly speaking it must be an oversight; for a hermeneuticist, there is no *the* world.
26. Ross, Kelley L., *op.cit.*, p. 2.
27. We will later modify this a little.
28. Bhattacharya, Gopinath, *Essays in Analytical Philosophy*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1989, p. 141.
29. Bhattacharyya, K.C., "Svaraj in Ideas", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 4, 1984 (Special No.).
30. Stegmuller, W., "The So-called Circle of Understanding" in his *Collected Papers*, etc., Vol. II, D. Reidel, 1977, p. 9.
31. Not only it has been said that even gods cannot turn a jar into a piece of cloth but also we are not permitted to interpret an expression occurring in the Veda in a way that is contrary to the way it is interpreted if and when it happens to occur outside the Vaidika context. The first figure represents the characteristic Indian tenet stated in the Veda that the same one reality is described (interpreted) in many different ways.

10

Apropos of Devices and Canons of Interpretation: An Ancient Indian Perspective

Karunasindhu Das

Like the corpus of thematic treasures contained in *śāstras*, methodology of presentation thereof, or for that matter, interpretation has been, for long, an interesting study in India. Evolution of a variety of commentary literature and formulation of *tantrayuktis* in different disciplines make this quite colourful. In the Taittirīya passage on dissolution of the continuous speech into components,[1] for example dissection is found adopted as the tool of understanding, though Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* thought it prudent to go further by way of citing examples and counter examples, and supplying with the missing link.[2] The *vārttika* and *bhāṣya* types of commentary on *sūtras* lay, in fact, special emphasis on additional quota of information[3] derived from subsequent data. *Vṛttis* and *ṭīkās,* on the other hand, tend to stick more or less, to the original they elucidate.[4] For further details in this respect, one may refer to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra,* chapter VI along with the *Abhinavabhāratī* thereon and a gist thereof available in *Supadmamakaranda,* the commentary on Padmanābhadatta's *Supadma* rules of Sanskrit grammar. A discourse, according to the above, may occur as either *uddeśa, lakṣaṇa* or *parīkṣā*, i.e., *nirukta.*[5] While by *uddeśa* is meant mere enumeration by name,[6] *lakṣaṇa* aims at identifying something by mentioning its unique feature which differentiates it from the rest.[7] It may be formulated initially as a rule (*sūtra*) but to be followed subsequently by a lucid verse of explanatory nature without any reference to confliciting arguments[8] relevant thereto. *Parīkṣa* is defined as scrutiny of the above in the event of any possible doubts.[9] It entails scanning the phraseology and diction and import as well for ascertaining the proposition in its decisive role against all oppositions.[10]

It banks, therefore, upon lexical reference and morphological analysis of grammar for ascertaining conventional and etymological word-meanings respectively and examines as well the semantico-syntactic relations[11] between parts of speech in the formulation. Besides semantic scrutiny with dialectic discourse among divergent viewpoints[12] contributes subtantially to arriving at a conclusion.

Abhinavagupta's observation on aspects of explanation (*vyākhyāprakāra*) is equally informative. It includes[13] quoting a text properly and indicating the other(s), filling in the gap and explaining away inconsistencies, selection of the exact meaning in case of polysemic words, justification for repetitive occurrence of any words, overall congruity and the like as essential components of an elaboration. It goes far beyond the general standard[14] adopted in grammatical circle for explaining a *sūtra* even though *cālanā* and *pratyavasthā* put up a lot by raising questions and justifying the same.[15]

It so happens, not infrequently, that a formulation, grammatical or otherwise, awaits further devices for decoding what it tends to communicate. It is for this that canons of interpretation (*paribhāṣā*) are evolved in grammar, *Mīmāṁsā* and the like, the basic dictum being *vyākhyānato viśeṣapratipattir na hi sandehād alakṣaṇam.* Verily, *vyākhyāna* encompasses disambiguation of a text through context or so and deliberations leading to application of a rule in preference to others in the given circumstances and so on. *Paribhāṣās* of grammar are, therefore, distributed by Nāgeśa over two broad groups viz. *śāstratva-sampādaka* (that which helps in arriving at the import of a rule) and *bādha-bīja* (clue to predominance of one over the other). Like Pāṇini's, post-Pāṇinian schools too have a long tradition of formulating *paribhāṣās*[16] and taking recourse thereto. Initially meant for interpreting a rule of grammar or so, a canon of interpretation very often transgresses its limit and may apply with equal effectiveness to ascertaining the import of any communication. As per the *paribhāṣā* viz. *arthavaśād vibhaktivipariṇāmo* (*bhavati*) (Mug. 136, 151; Kātantra 25; Bhoja 55; Puraṣottama 88; Śīradeva 120), for example, a part of speech changes its case-ending according as the sentence-meaning demands and as Kātantra, Cāndra and others observe it is speaker's intention (*vivakṣā*) that determines the meaning.[17] Sometimes a sentence completes itself by drawing a word, phrase or so from a previous one for the sake of the intended meaning.[18] Repetition is generally avoided.[19] Nevertheless, if it happens, it signifies either restriction or emphasis cf. *siddhe satyārambho niyamāya syāt (Kāt. 30) dvirbaddaṁ subaddhaṁ bhavati* (Hema 93). Rightly did a *Cāndra paribhāṣā* admit that any addition to meaning would signify additional benefit (*gamayati adhiko'rtho'dhikaṁ kāryam*-58). When two items occur at a place as co-relatives, subsequent exclusion of one indicates exclusion of the both.[20] A meaningful unit is always preferable to a meaningless segment.[21] A word that refers to the whole may naturally refer to its parts as well[22] though the claim of the former is stronger than the latter in terms of convention.[23] Of course, it is to be taken into account whether the whole or its part(s) would fit in sentence meaning.[24] In the sentence viz. *gargāḥ śataṁ daṇḍyantām,* for example, the whole family of Garga's descendants, and not each individual member is to pay rupees one hundred only as fine. In *Devadatta-Yajñadatta-Viṣṇumitrā bhojyantām,* on the other hand, each of the three persons is expected to be entertained with food. Bhartṛhari extended the relevant speculation further with a polysemous noun in plural meaning differently in each case of its being related to three different verbs e.g. *akṣā bhajyantāṁ, bhujyantāṁ, dīvyantām* – (meaning let spokes of a wheel be broken, let *vibhītaka* fruits be eaten and let the dice be played),[25] simultaneity and sequence being two ways of putting the same thing.[26] Generally, a formulation applies to a case once only; but cases are not rare when it applies for more than once in the given circumstances.[27] True, a general observation may not apply to some individuals. Still it is not to be treated as redundant in that respect. It is like raining on land and waterbodies simultaneously.[28] A word may refer to either an accomplished fact or a prospective one with equal stress thereon[29] according as the situation demands. While conventional meaning is preferable to the etymological one,[30] a technical meaning assigned for a specific purpose predominates over the non-technical in a discourse.[31] Cases are not rare, however, where both are adopted for the sake of exegencies.[32] The word viz. *karman,* for example, refers to action (*kriyā*) in some cases but means objective case elsewhere in grammar while *saṁkhyā* accomodates both conventional (e.g., one, two, three, etc.) and non-conventional technical references e.g., *bahu, gaṇa, kati, yāvat, iyat*, etc. Preference of the direct and individual reference (*pratipadokta*) to indirect (*lākṣaṇika*) ones[33] or, for that matter, predominance of the primary (*mukhya*) over the secondary ones (*gauṇa*)[34] is equally important. A compound of two divine names viz. *Agni* and *Soma* would, therefore, acquire long *ī* as the ultimate vowel of the first member followed by cerebral *ṣ* as the initial of the second member (*agnīṣomau*), whereas two human names would result in *agni-somau*. By *gopālakam ānaya, kaṭajakam ānaya*, etc., it is the primary meaning of *gopālaka, kaṭajaka* or so (i.e. to say, a cowherd, one born on a mat or so) that is referred to and understood. It is only in a special context viz. intention of the speaker or so that a secondary meaning may be resorted to here. As for a single nominal without any reference to a neighbouring item preference of conventional meaning to unconventional one is totally out of place.

Cases of conflict between possible alternatives, therefore, are taken care of in grammatical discourses very cautiously. A subsequent formulation has, for example, an overriding effect over the precedent one if only both enjoy equal importance. It may so happen somewhere that both take place one after the other but elsewhere what overrides does not allow the other to occur at all.[35] In case either of the two is obligatory (*nitya*), intimate (*antaraṅga*) or specific (*apavāda*) the other is superseded, though between any two of the above the latter is predominant over the former.[36] A special provision may however accommodate a general provision[37] as well under very special circumstances.

The dichotomy involved in identifying an archetype with its modifications is another area of concern in grammatical parlance. Notably partial change in terms of loss[38] or increment[39] is generally admissible in the original without affecting its identity. For a greater change however *sthānivadbhāva* (substitution) is the proper method to resort to. That a case of imitation[40] does not require any such devices goes without saying. Of course, an extended application, or for that matter, any indirect formulation based on and derived from a direct one is not treated as mandatory.[41]

Reference to many of such canons of interpretation (*paribhāṣā*) is a familiar practice with commentary literature of different schools of Sanskrit grammar. Commentaries on the *Mugdhabodha* by Rāma Tarkavāgīśa and Durgādāsa Vidyāvāgīśa, for example, are replete with observations based on *paribhāṣā*-s. Cases of selection of the primary in preference to the secondary and those of non-discrimination between the two, in particular, have been thoroughly ascertained therein.[42] Semantic increment in absence of morphological addition viz. affixation too is duly taken care of[43] at the face of an ancient formulation that additional meaning implies additional grammatical function.[44] Extension of provision of option or so to an antecedent formulation is another interesting item which RTv compares to the retreating look of a lion.[45] While possibility of both forward and backward reference resembles to that of a calf sucking its mother's teats from both front and rear,[46] a galloping forward provision, on the ther hand, is fondly called 'a frog's jump'.[47] Admission of open-ended option (*vyavasthā*) with provision for one item or absence thereof or either too helps a lot in ascertaining a meaning.[48]

Barring the cases where a governing rule or a part thereof is adjusted with neighbouring one(s) to complete a formulation to the effect that context plays the pivot, grammar usually does not look beyond a sentence boundary for communication. To the *Mīmāṁsā*, on the other hand, a whole discourse may be construed as one unitary whole if it involves one singular import.[49] Word-meanings are accordingly curved out. A hyperbolic expression (*arthavāda*), for example, has no face value excepting praise or censure of the relevant injunction.[50] The device of choice in terms of *śruti, līṅga, vākya, prakaraṇa, sthāna* and *samākhyā* is a unique feature of *Mīmāṁsā* which is equally resorted to in Vedānta so much so that individual words viz. *setu, ākāśa, prāṇa*, etc., in upaniṣadic passages are construed to refer to *Brahman*. Whether that involves relegation of primary meaning to the secondary position or not is a different question.

One thing is however certain. Between a part and the whole, no school of thought, be it *padaśāstra*, i.e., *Vyākaraṇa* or *vākyaśāstra*, i.e., *Mīmāṁsā*, ever admits predominance of the former over the latter.[52] And it should equally apply to sentential environment and beyond. The *vyākaraṇa* scheme of making a certain group of rules *asiddha* (inefficient) in relation to others, or for that matter, discrimination in application between rules according to positional status or so in a text (e.g., *purastād apavāda, madhye apavāda* etc.) is a case in point. Both *Mīmāṁsā* and *Vyākaraṇa* tend to ascertain a śāstric import for the sake of practical application according as they need. A whole discourse, therefore, is the limit within which one is to interpret the formulations. A certain linguistic structure is admissible as standard or otherwise accordingly in a grammar. The *Mīmāṁsā* offers a five-point diagram[53] of *adhikaraṇa* to arrive at the exact import of a text through scrutiny and identifies about 960 cases for study in its *sūtra* text. Verily, a proposition when followed by doubt, prima facie solution and reply thereto does culminate into final solution. Apart from this structural method, however, one may also resort to the six-point *mīmāṁsā* programme of semantic analysis[54] of a text viz. beginning and conclusion (*upakrama* and *upasaṁhāra*) repetition (*abhyāsa*), uniqueness (*apūrvatā*), result (*phala*), praise (*arthavāda*) and logical support (*upapatti*) for arriving at the import. Resolution adopted at a place through such methodical analysis and circumstantial bindings has set examples to be referred to subsequently as *nyāya* (maxim) in various branches of learning viz. Rhetorics, Sociology (*smṛti*), *vyākaraṇa* and the like. Popular maxims too have come up to augment this list (e.g. *sthālīpulāka-nyāya, sthūṇānikhanana-nyāya, Devadatta-hantṛ-hata-nyāya* etc.)

With all this accumulation, schools of Sanskrit grammar have got elaborate lists of canons of interpretation where śāstric formulations (*vācanika*), maxims (*nyāya*), and popular practices (*lōka*) join hands.

Abbreviations

Ab — Abhinavabhāratī
DDV — Durgādāsa Vidyāvāgīśa
Maha. — Mahābhāṣya
Mug — Mugdhabodha
RTv — Rāma Tarkavāgīśa
Sm — Supadma-makaranda
Nś — Nāṭyaśāstra
Vp — Vākyapadīya

Notes and References

1. *madhyato'vakramya vyākarot.*
2. *na kevalāni carcāpadāni vyākhyāṇaṁ, ... udāharaṇaṁ, pratyudāharaṇaṁ vākyādhyāhāra ityetat samuditaṁ vyākhyānaṁ bhavati* — Mahā. paspaśā, on *lakṣya-lakṣaṇa vyākaraṇam.*
3. *yad vismṛtaṁ adṛṣṭaṁ vā sūtrakāreṇa tat sphuṭam, vākyakāro bravīty evaṁ tenādṛṣṭaṁ ca bhāṣyakṛt.* — quoted in Padamañjarī, Intro.
4. *(a) sūtrārthapradhāno grantho vṛttiḥ, sā ceha. sūtrāṇāṁ .... vivaraṇam.*
   (b) nāmūlaṁ likhyate kiñcin, nānapekṣitaṁ ucyate — Mallinātha
5. *tridhā śāstrasya pravṛttiḥ — uddeśo lakṣaṇam, parīkṣā ca.*
6. *uddeśo nāmamātreṇa saṁkīrtanaṁ* — Sm
7. *(a) jñātum iṣṭaṁ vyāvṛttyā svarūpaṁ lakṣyate yena, tat lakṣaṇam* — Sm
   (b) uddiṣṭasya dharmyantara-vyavacchedakam lakṣaṇaṁ vaktavyam — Ab on Nś 6.11.
8. *pūrvaṁ sūtreṇa, tato'py ākṛtākṣepottaraprapañcena tad-vivaraṇa-mātra-rūpeṇa sukhagrāhyeṇa ślokena. ubhayor api hi lakṣaṇaṁ pratipādyam* — ibid.
9. *saṁśaye svarūpaṁ parīkṣyate yayā sā parīkṣā* — Sm.
10. *yaḥ sūcako'rtho lakṣaṇātmakaḥ, sa yatra ākṣepapratisamādhāna-lakṣaṇe vastuni sati sthāpito bhavati, tat parīkṣārūpaṁ niruktam* — Ab on Nś 6. 12-13.

11. *abhidhānakośena rūḍhiṣu anyeṣu prakṛtipratyaya-vibhāga-nigamanayā ...... dhātvarthasya kriyāyā hetūnāṁ ca kriyānimittānāṁ kārakāṇāṁ saṁyojanaṁ vicāro yatra* — ibid.
12. *arthaparīkṣām api darśayati — nānāprakāraiḥ sarvatantrapratitantrādibhiḥ siddhāntaiḥ pramāṇa-mūlair arthaiḥ sādhitam ākṣepottarayoḥ sādhanā .... prayojanaṁ saṁkṣepeṇārthāvadhāraṇam* — ibid.
13. *upādeyasya sampāṭhas tadanyasya pratīkanam, sphuṭavyākhyā virodhānāṁ parihāraḥ supūrṇatā, lakṣyānusaraṇaṁ śliṣṭavaktavyāṁśa-vivecanam, saṅgatiḥ paunaruktyānāṁ samādhānasamākulam, saṁgrahaścetyayaṁ vyākhyā-prakāro'tra samāśritaḥ* — Ab, Intro. 5-7.
14. (*a*) *upodghātaḥ padañcaiva padārthaḥ padavigrahaḥ,*
    cālanā pratyavasthā ca vyākhyā tantrasya ṣaḍvidhāḥ
    — Quoted in Sm.

    (*b*) *padachedo padārthoktir vigraho vākyayojanā*
    ākṣepo'tha samādhānaṁ vyākhyānaṁ ṣaḍvidhaṁ smṛtam.
    — quoted by Haribhāskara Agnihotrin on *vyākhyānato viśeṣapratipattir* etc.
15. *upodghāto vibhaktyā padavichedaḥ. padasya prakṛti-vibhaktyarthakathanaṁ padārthaḥ. samāsapadasya vākyakathanaṁ padavigrahaḥ. prakṛtipratyayārthavṛttibhyāṁ labdhasyākṣepaścālanā. cālitasya prayojanopanyāsaḥ pratyavasthā* — Sm
16. cf. *Paribhāṣāsaṁgraha*, edited critically by MM K.V. Abhyankar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune 1967 for *paribhāṣās* belonging to Cāndra, Śākaṭāyana, Kātantra, Haima and other schools of Sanskrit grammar including those of Pāṇini's school.
17. (*i*) *vaktur vivakṣitapūrvikā śabdārthapratipattiḥ* (Kātantra 61);
    (*ii*) *vivakṣāvyāpter iṣṭāvasāyaḥ* (Cāndra 67);
    (*iii*) *vivakṣātaḥ kārakāvasāyaḥ* (Cāndra 68).
18. *iṣṭato'dhikārāṇāṁ pravṛtti-nivṛttī* (Jainendra-paribhāṣāvṛtti 50)
19. (*i*) *uktārthānām aprayogaḥ* (Kātantra 46);
    (*ii*) *ukte'rthe tatpratyayāprayogaḥ* (Bhāvamiśra 22).
20. (*i*) *sanniyogaśiṣṭānām ekatarāpāye ubhayor apy apāyaḥ.* (Vyāḍi 41)
    (*ii*) *ekayoganirdiṣṭānāṁ sahaiva pravṛttiḥ sahaiva nivṛttiḥ* (Kātantra 9)
21. *arthavad-grahaṇe nānarthakasya* (Vyāḍi 1)
22. *samudāyeṣu śabdāḥ pravṛttāḥ avayaveṣvapi vartante.* (Vyāḍi 85)
23. *avayavaprasiddheḥ samudāyaprasiddhir balīyasī.* (Sīradeva 104).
24. (*i*) *pratyekaṁ vākyaparisamāptiḥ* (Vyāḍi 28).
    (*ii*) *samudāyepi vākyaparisamāptiḥ* (ibid 29)
    Also, cf. *devadattādiṣu bhujiḥ / pratyekam avatiṣṭhate pratisvatantraṁ vākyaṁ vā bhedena pratipadyate.* — Vp. 2.452.
25. *akṣādiṣu yathā bhinnā bhakṣi-bhañji-divikriyāḥ/prayogakālābhede'pi pratibhedaṁ pṛthak sthitāḥ.* — Vp 2.460.
26. *dvāv abhyupāyau śabdānāṁ prayoge samavasthitau,*
    kramo vā yaugapadyaṁ vā loko nātivartate. — Vp. 2.462.

27. *yāvat sambhavas tāvad vidhiḥ* — (kātantra 54).
28. *parjanyaval lakṣaṇapravṛttiḥ* — (Vyāḍi 64).
29. *bhāvini bhūtavad upacāraḥ* — (Kātantra 26).
30. *avayavaprasiddheḥ samudāyaprasiddhir balīyasī* — (Sīradeva 104).
    Also, cf. *rūḍhir yogāpahāriṇi.*
31. *kṛtrimākṛtrimayoḥ krtrime kāryasampratyayaḥ* — (Vyāḍi 6).
32. *ubhayagatir iha bhavati.*
33. *lākṣaṇikabhinnasya .... grahaṇam ..... lākṣaṇikasya tu na syāt*
    — Durgādāsa on *Mugdhabodha* 146
    Also cf. *lakṣaṇa-pratipadoktayoḥ pratipadoktasyaiva*—(Vyāḍi 3).
34. *mukhyasyaivāyaṁ vidhih* ..... (Rāma Tarkavāgīśa on *Mugdhabodha* 132).
    Also cf. *gauṇamukhyayor mukhye kānyasampratyayaḥ*—(Vyāḍi 4)
35. *sakṛdgatau vipratiṣedhe yad bādhitaṁ tad bādhitam eva* —(Vyaḍi 35).
36. *(i) asiddhaṁ bahiraṅgam antaraṅge* (on *Mugdhabodha* 59, 168).
    (ii) sāvakāśa-niravakāśayor niravakāśo vidhir balavān
    (on *Mugdhabodha* 126, 146, 149)
37. *(i) apavādaviṣayeṣvapi utsargasamāveśaḥ*— Kātantra 37.
    (ii) kvacid apavādaviṣaye'py utsargo'bhiniviśate — on *Mugdhabodha* 130.
38. *ekadeśavikṛtam ananyavat* — on *Mugdhabodha* 148/Kātantra 1.
39. *āgamo yadbhaktas tadgrahaṇena gṛhyate* — on *Mugdhabodha* 157.
    Also, cf. *tad-bhaktastadgrahaṇena gṛhyate* — (Vyāḍi 17) and *tanmadhyapatitas tadgrahaṇena* .... (ibid. 18).
40. *prakṛtivad anukaraṇaṁ bhavati* — (Vyāḍi 86)
41. *(i) ātideśikakāryam anityam* — on *Mugdhabodha* 144, 158;
    (ii) jñāpakasiddham anityam — ibid 137.
42. cf. RTv on Mug. 145, 148, 195, 197, 199, 201, 239, 280, DDV on Mug. 145, 148, 197, 217, 258.
43. *tyalope tyalakṣaṇam* — DDV on Mug. 188, 247.
44. *gamayati adhiko'rtho'dhikaṁ kāryam* — Vyāḍi 58.
45. *siṁhāvalokitanyāyena vā-grahaṇāt* etc. — RTv on Mug. 248.
46. *kroḍataḥ pṛṣṭhato vāpi mātur vatsastanaṁ pibet* — DDV.
47. *maṇḍūkaplutyā ..... anuvartate* — DDV on Mug. 207. RTv on Mug. 287.
48. *iha śāstre vyavasthitavibhāṣā bhavati* — Vyāḍi 32.
49. *arthaikatvād ekaṁ vākyaṁ, sākāṅkṣaṁ ced vibhāge syāt.*
    — (Jaimini 2.1.46).
50. *vidhinā tvekavākyatvāt stutyarthena vidhīnāṁ syuḥ* — (Jaimini)
51. cf. *A Vedānta perspective on Disambiguation* by K.S. Das in *Indian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. XX, 2001.
52. *avayavaprasiddheḥ samudāyaprasiddhir balīyasī* (Sīradeva 104).
53. *viṣayaḥ saṁśayaścaiva pūrvapakṣas tathottaram,*
    nirṇayaśceu pañcāṅgaṁ śāstre'dhikaraṇaṁ smṛtam.
54. *upakramopasaṁhārāv abhyāso'pūrvatā phalam*
    arthavādopapattī ca liṅgaṁ tātparyanirṇaye.

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11

Text & Interpretation: Indian Context

D.N. Tiwari

I

There are different sorts of text out of which those originally revealed directly to the seers who by penance, sacrifice and constant practice of searching the truth made their consciousness receptive enough to receive the text directly without a reference to texts written beforehand are considered first category of texts. Secondly, there are original thoughts of the persons having intellectual excellence who on the basis of references to earlier texts make some innovation by way of separations of specific subject of the text, passages of some text prescribed as a chapter of learning, deciphering treatments distinguished from their interpretations and thirdly, works that are considered additions of some uniqueness to the understanding of the earlier texts by way of arrangement of sentences, dialogues, arguments, critical observations, etc. are included. Lastly, the designation 'text' is given to any book that follows a line of investigation, criticism and refutations of the established thoughts, collection of the poetries and essays authored or written.

We, generally, designate any expression or even a piece of wording as a text if it contains some characteristics that may include originality and creativity. Uniqueness of principles, ideology, presentation of principles of intellect, innovative thought in the area of learning, rulings unmarked earlier, thoughts having some excellence, passages selected from them, etc., are also called texts. It seems very difficult to define the concept of text because the concept is commonly applied in recent time for any piece of work having even none of the aforementioned distinctions required for. Not only that, there are evidences that works which are considered by us as texts, declare themselves to be only a versions of other texts. There are some texts that are revealed and not written while there are those that are written by authors with a claim to originality in the form of creativity or of some other excellence. Poets and authors emphasize their work as the creations of their imagination and, hence, original. However, it seems that originality forms the central feature of a text. Very like the concept of text, originality of the text, as I have presented above, may also be defined differently. However, I take it in the sense of direct revelations of radically new flashes of principles of truth distinguished from commentaries and glosses.

In this paper, I confine my observation only to *Veda* as original text that is revealed directly to the seers and sages without a reference to any text written beforehand and that serves as the foundation of other texts of the tradition. As revelation flashes forth to the seers who were in constant practice for searching the truth, they are philosophical texts as well. Here, by the term 'philosophical' I mean truth seeking, that is, search into the wisdom. The presentation, in this paper, is based, basically, on Bhartṛhari's observations on *Śruti* as text in the light of his *Vākyapadīya* and the commentaries on it.

II

In Indian Culture, *Veda* is the text. Etymologically, it stands for knowledge, the affluence of wisdom containing four collections of expressions (*saṃhitās*) namely — *Ṛk, Yajur, Sāma* and *Atharva.* The *Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads* are attached to them. Different applications of it through Vedic priestly schools (*Caraṇas*) and their different branches (*Śākhās*) are readings of the same. A *śākhā* is a branch under a *caraṇa* having its own reading (Vedic text) of the *Veda.* Different branches (*Śākhās*) of schools (*Caraṇas*) of the four *Vedas, Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads, Vedāṅgas, Sūtras, Smṛtis Purāṇas,* six systems of orthodox philosophies namely, *Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṁsā* and *Vedānta,* themselves accept *Veda* as the original text. They all are also called texts because they add to *Veda* in a way of illustration, interpretation, clarification through meeting the queries raised by opponents for making its wisdom and knowledge understandable and applicable in the variations of the contexts of time, space, situation, etc. They are called '*Śāstras*' as they are explanations and regulations (*Śāsanācchamsanāccaiva śāstramityucyate budhaiḥ*[1]) based on *Veda.* Out of the two, the regulations are of two kinds – prescriptions and prohibitions. They are concerned directly with action while the explanatory sentences (*Arthavāda*) usually recommend the former (*vidhi*) by stating the merit of the proper observance of the former and the evil arising from its violation and also by adducing instances in its support (*Tatraikam vidhirūpeṇa tadanyat pratiṣedhataḥ. Śansanam bhūtavastvekaviṣayam na kriyāparam*).[2] There is originality in commentaries also and their teachings are non-contradicted, irreproachable, doubtless and veritable.

The text is a revealed truth. The seers by penance and constant practice (*sādhanā*) for the search of uncontradicted wisdom and truth made their brilliance fit for receiving those eternal truths directly and imparted them to their righteous pupils for application for the welfare of the universe and for achieving their well-being as well. As it contains uncontradicted wisdom of truth, it is authority in the matter of further investigations into the understanding of truth. It is called *śruti* as it is followed orally since time immemorial.

The *Caraṇa* and *Śākhā* are not the same. The seers taking one to one of all of the four *pādaveda* (collection) established the institution of *Caraṇa* for easy learning and application of the text. It is due to different readings, preaching, teaching and putting into practice of the different readings (*pāthas*) that different *Śākhās* of a single *Caraṇa* came into being. Even in a single *Caraṇa* there are a number of *Śākhā*-texts. For example, there are fifteen *Śākhās* (*Mādhyandinī, Kāṭhaka, Kāṇva, Gālavādi*) of the *Vājasaneya Caraṇa* of the *Vājasaneya Yajus saṃhitā.* There are hundred *Śākhās* of *Yajur Veda*, one thousand of *Sāma Veda,* twenty one of *ṚgVeda* (according to some others fifteen *Śākhās* only) and nine *Śākhās* of *Atharva Veda.*[3]

According to Bhartṛhari, it is due to difference of *Śākhās* that the difference of reading form of the words taught, tone in reciting and some other sort of changes in descriptive sentences that specify their difference came into existence. But this difference was there on the explanatory sentences or illustrations (*arthavāda*) only and with the differences, the action taught was not changed. It was the same as it was there in the original text. The same action is taught in different *Śākhās.*

Though *saṃhitā* is not found without a *Śākhā*, the former is original and the later is an adaptation of the former brought in application by a *Śākhā. Śākhā* is the traditional recession of the *Veda;* a traditional text followed by a school and *Saṃhitā* is continuous hymn text with the phonetic changes in the explanatory sentences incurred by the uses of different *Śākhās* or branches. The changes incurred in the application of *mantra* by different *Śākhā*-texts are due to the time, space, situation and other contexts in which the *Saṃhitā* is adopted in use for an act. We do not find a *Saṃhitā* independently of a *Śākhā* because the former may came in application only through the latter.[4]

Form of words, tone, etc., taught in a particular branch are correct forms of the word (*sadhuśabda*) and express their particular meaning in that *Śākhā* and not in another *Śākhā*. It provides knowledge and fruits – merit by application taught in that very *Śākhā*. Similar is the case with another *Śākhā* with different form of the word, tone, etc. For example in the *Kāthaka Śākhā* of *Śuklayajur Veda,* the word '*deva*' and '*sumna*' are taught as correct form (*devāyanto yajamānāḥ sumnāyanto havāmahe*[5]). In other *Śākhās*, the word '*devayuḥ*' and '*sumnayuḥ*' are taught as correct forms. The recitations of those words in respective *Śākhās* provide fruit. They express the same meaning (*vācya*) in the respective *Śākhā* text to which they belong.

What exactly does using the term *ṚgVeda,* etc mean, without mentioning *Śākhā* to which the text belongs? Replying to the question it can be said that use of the term *ṚgVeda,* etc., without a mention of a *Śākhā* is to refer to the original *Saṃhitā,* that is, the commandment and injunctions of which all *Śākhās* are in accord. No *Śākhā* differs on the duty. They may differ on the application of the *Saṃhitā* for some or the other duty. These may be cases of differing even conflicting injunctions (*vidhi*) prescribed for the same sacrifice in different *Śākhạs*. In that case *Mīmāṁsakas* and *Vaiyākaraṇas* have given certain specific and general laws for finding out which part is injunction and which part is *Arthavāda* that is added by that *Śākhā*. There is no conflict in an injunction as such in any of the *Śākhās*. Different *Śākhās* apply the same injunction for different duties in a sacrifice. The same injunction in some *Śākhā* is applied for some duty in a sacrifice and for some other duty in another *Śākhā* that may appear conflicting if the use context of the injunction is over-looked in the respective *Śākhā*-text.

III

Problem of Identity and Difference of the Text

It may be asked that the name of the sacrifice cannot be mentioned independently of *Śākhā*-texts and, hence, the sacrifice as mentioned in different *Śākhā*-texts has to be treated as different from one another.

Veda is application rooted (*vyavahāra*) and application is made through *Śākhā*-texts. Sacrifice is an act and the applicants perform the action as injected in their own *Śākhā*-text. Not only the actions performed by the different *Śākhās* are different but actions performed by the same person of the same *Śākhā* in different times and spaces are also different because of the fruits they produce are new achievements in each application. They are different from the fact of difference of time, space and the persons doing the act.

Let us discuss the issue of identity. To be precise, I can say that from the point of view of achievement of the fruits, the difference theory is justified but from the point of view of cognition identity theory holds reasonably because identical cognition of the action in its different instances and occurrences is revealed by the respective *Śākhā*-text.

Herein, I want to furnish an account of Bhartṛhari's discussion on the issue and I hope that this account will be of some importance in meeting the query.

Śabdabhedavāda, in connection to the *Vedas*, is accepted. The same *mantras* with the difference of their application to duty or duties are taken differently.[6] The difference of the *mantra* is also accepted in case of the single *mantra* if it is employed for different duties.

Bhartṛhari has given three theories interpreting plurality of meaning of a word in a sentence. Those theories are equally applicable in the context of decision on variation of the injunctions in different *Śākhās*:

(i) Śabda-Ekatvavāda

This theory accepts the unity or non-difference of the word in spite of its different uses for different meanings.[7] The word is not changed even if it is used for many meanings. The unity of word is original or primary and its separateness resulting from different uses is artifical or unreal.[8] For example, the word 'cow', the expresser of cowness, does not differ from the word 'cow' when used for cowherd (*Gaurbāhīka*). The cowness by some similarity is imposed on cowherd and thus the word 'cow' secondarily denotes it.

(ii) Śabda Nānātvavāda

In this theory, the word is different if it is used for different meanings. Unlike the former view, change of word used for different meanings, in this view, is original, and oneness of sameness is imaginary or unreal. As no verbal-cognition or communication is possible without the identical cognition revealed by a word, *nānātvavādins* also give place to unity of word used for different meanings, but, for them, unity is mere imagined and, hence, unreal.[9] For example, the word 'cow' used for cowness (meaning) is different from the word 'cow' used for 'cowherd'. As these words are same and alike, they are taken as the same by resemblance.

(iii) Vaiyākaraṇas' View

Vaiyākaraṇas attach importance to both of the above views for the explanation of meaning of a word acquired by grammatical analysis of an expression. '*Vārtikakāra* Kātyāyana has written the '*Vārtika ekatvādakārasya siddham*[10] in favour of unity of a word if it is used for different meanings on the one hand and the *Vārtika* '*Ānyabhāvyam tu kāla Śabdavyavāyāt*'[11] in support of plurality of words, on the other hand.

In order to illustrate the significance of theories of *śabda-ekatvavāda* and *śabdanānātvavāda,* respectively, in the interpretation of Vedic injunctions, Bhartṛhari has given an instance of '*Sāmidhenī*' hymns which in some *Śākhās* are thirteen (13) and in some other *Śākhās* they are eleven (11) of which the first and last verses (*ṛchāyena*) are recited repeatedly three times because of which they are numbered seventeen or fifteen *Sāmidhenī* hymns in total in respective *Śākhās.* It may be asked, if the same hymn, in its repeated recitations, is taken to be different, can the repeated hymn be accepted as an original (Vedic) hymn? These Hymns are called *Sāmidhenī.* Repeated hymns are considered original; they function independently of other *Sāmidhenīs* involved in a *Sāmidhenī* sacrifice,[12] as these *mantras* reveal the universal (of *Sāmidhenī*) which does not differ with the differences and which inheres in all individual *sāmidhenīs* belonging to different *śākhās,* identical cognition of *Sāmidhenī* is revealed in different instances and occurrences of it.

Clarifying the position of *nānātvavādins,* Bhartṛhari says[13] that the meaning of a hymn is its recitation and in each recitation a hymn is a different word revealing different meaning. For example, the hymns of the deity Sun (*Savitā*) apparently appears to be one but originally it is different, i.e., one is employed for sanctification, another for praying the deity 'Sun' and still another is employed for *Japa* (muttering in a contemplating manner). As the hymns are similar and alike, the unity among them resembles, but the hymn is a different expresser (*Vācaka*) if used for a different expressed (*Vācya*). Because of the popular and unpopular uses of the hymn, its primary and secondary meanings are distinguished.

So far the question of identity of the differences occurred in the application of the same hymn in different actions or the independence of the different uses of the same hymn is concerned, Bhartṛhari has observed it a cognitive problem that, specifically, concerns the question of identical cognition. According to him, the hymn reveals identical cognition in an application and another identical cognition in another application and it is the congnition of universal of the hymn applied in different applications that identical cognition is revealed. In this case, identity is the identity of the hymn and not of the applications. In the latter case, *Vaiyākaraṇas* accept the identity of word in spite of different functions performed by it because a word is a power and can act on for different actions and it is the universal of the hymns and the universal of the action performed by the use of the hymn that idential cognition is revealed in different occurrences and instances of the hymn. The universal inheres all the differences in use of the same hymn and the universal of the meanings they reveal in different applications as well.

Let me clarify the issue by an instance of the 'pot' and the cognition of pot. There are different sorts of individual pots of which all pots are different but so far cognition is concerned one knows them all as pots. It is because of the universal 'potness' that all are cognized as pot. Similarly, the form of the injunction is the meaning of the injunction and that is cognized by the injunction itself (*Vākyapadīya*, henceforth VP.2/262) because in Bhartṛhari's active theory of cognition by language, the language expresses first its own nature from which its meaning is revealed non-differently. The identical cognition by the language is revealed by the universal that is the universal of the language and of the meaning as well. The difference of the thing 'pot' is materially real but the identical cognition by the word 'pot' (*mantra,* in the example under consideration) in different uses is cognitive real. However, no knowledge is possible if identical cognition by the word is not expressed and universal revealed by the uses serves as the cause of identical cognition.

IV

Difference between *Śruti* & *Smṛtiyāna*

According to Bhartṛhari[14] different *Smṛtiyāna,* having tangible and intangible objectives, contain codes of life written and popularly practiced are formed by memory of the wise based on *Vedas.* For instance — *Vaiṇavim dhārayedyaṣṭim*[15] (the stick of bamboo should be hold) — its visible objective is that the old man who hold the bamboo stick does not slip. These things are edible those things are not edible, this speech be made that speech should not be made, these *smṛtiyāna* prescribing thus have intangible objective.

There may be conflict between two *smṛtiyāna*. In those cases the prescription is decided on the basis of difference of the objective the two conflicting *smṛtiyāna* possess. For example, *Pañcapañcanakhā bhakṣaya: abhakṣayo grāma kukkuṭaḥ* (Animals having five claws should be eaten; the village cock is non-edible.[16] Swan should be eaten; swan should not be eaten'. The *smṛtiyāna*, under consideration, have different objectives – tangible (*dṛṣṭa*) and intangible (*adṛṣṭa*) and the *smrtiyanas* are opposed to one another. Here, the decision of the wise (*śiṣṭas*) is silent; *śruti* is silent. In that case the *smṛtiyāna* having tangible objective is decided invalid. Eating of the animals having five claws is a tangible objective opposed to the *smṛtiyana* prohibiting the eating of animal and thus having intangible objective and therefore invalid.

According to commentary *Vṛṣabha*, there is an obvious reason for prescribing eating of the animal and that is sometimes, perhaps, a misunderstanding of the text and another time greediness for eating flesh. It is for that reason that some writers of *smṛtiyāna* inserted by forge the eating of animals as a prescription and such projections corrupted the *smṛtiyāna*.

Showing his resentment over spurious insertion of some of the *smṛtiyana* causing a misunderstanding of the text and some how or the other continuing as a tradition of their own, Bhartṛhari says that such *smṛtiyāna* resulted out of the wicked intention and allegiance to the greediness of the author of the *smṛtiyāna*. They are sometimes contradictory on the prescription of an act, for example, some author of the *smṛtiyāna* prohibit killing of a *Brāhmaṇa* as it causes demerit while some other prescribe killing of a *Brāhmaṇa*, in *Puruṣamegha* sacrifice, essential as it promotes to heavenly abode. The reason, as Bhartṛhari observes, is the allegiance of the malignant author of that *smṛtiyāna* to his incendiary longings, greed, etc., that are tangible objective.[17]

Explaining the difference between the *śruti* and *smṛtiyāna*, Bhartṛhari accepts that there is eternity in the sense of continuity of the meaning of the both. Both of them give central importance to action. However, he notices differences between them. An account of the differences observed by him are given as follows:

- There is no part in the *śruti*; it is indivisible whole while *smṛtiyāna* are elucidation of the former based on whole part division.

- *Śrutiyāna* are authorless, the seers got the vision of the *śrutiyāna* and taught them directly to their pupils while *smṛtiyāna* are authored later on the basis of the memory of *śruti* with the favour and contact of the meaning of the words and indications lying there in *śrutiyāna.*
- *Śrutiyāna* are the seer's knowledge and the seers are free from all sorts of allegiances (physiological, psychological and cultural) while this is not exactly the same in case of different *smṛtiyāna* as their authors are not always free from allegiances and they make some insertion with the explanatory illustrations (*arthavāda*).

So far authenticity and validity of the knowledge by *śrutiyāna* and *smṛtiyāna* is concerned. Bhartṛhari has clarified the issue on the basis of an example of the cognition by *Apabhraśas* (incorrect use or corrupt words) in cases of which the correct form of word of which that was an incorrect form is expressed in the mind of the hearer and then the meaning is revealed by the correct form of the word non-differently. Incorrect words may have also a tradition in a linguistic community and they may express the meaning but in every case, the use of the correct form of the word is recommended by the seers (*śiṣṭas*) of the tradition for merit. It is that on which our communication is based and thus for checking any corruption of communication by wild uses.

Vaiyākaraṇas accept that *Śruti* is always authentic in the matter of knowledge and wisdom of truth. *Smṛtiyāna* are valid and evidential if uncontradicted by the *śruti.* Out of the two *smṛtiyāna* contradicting one another, the prescription having intangible objective is vaild while that having tangible objective is invalid.[18]

In concluding we can say that a text is an expression of a complete indivisible meaning; it is uncontradicted wisdom of truth unmarked earlier. It is clear to a wise but the beginners and ignorant requires it interpreted for understanding. By the term complete meaning, I mean a flash of understanding concluding expectancy for the completion of a unit sense and by the term 'indivisible' I mean indivisibility of the unit of cognition or that there is no possibility of parts in a unit awareness in nature. Analytic devices including interpretations are facilitating to the beginners for making it understandable through them. The term 'expression' stands for the unit of awareness articulated through verbal-token that is garbs of the expression. There is no question of length and width of a text as it is the unit of awareness. A book is not a text though it may contain a text. There may by an author or writer of a text or it may be anonymous. It may form a tradition, if followed, orally or written, from generation to generation.

V

Interpretation of the Text

Interpretation or commentary is generally taken as a method handy for clarifying the wisdom of the text having profound indivisible meaning and application. The aphoristic expressions with brevity can be understood to beginners only through interpretation. An interpretation is a process of making the indivisible understandable by analyzing the text into parts, that is, into sentence, terms, words and words into roots and suffixes, understanding the meaning of the sentence through the association of word-meanings, breaking the components of the compounds, placing the sentences in a order, replying the objections of the opponents raised regarding the meaning and application of the text and illuminating by elucidation (*Padavicchedaḥ padārthokti-vigraha-vākyayojanā, ākṣepa-samādhāna-vyākyānaṁ pañcalakṣaṇaṁ).*[19] The *Vedas, sūtras* (aphorism) and *śāstras* based on the authority of *Veda* are interpreted (*Bhāṣya*) because of two basic reasons first, they contain the wisdom of uncontradicted eternal truth and secondly, they express a complete indivisible concept in few sentences of very few words. The masters of the tradition further commented those interpretations. These comments are called *Vārtika.* A Vārtika is that in which the thoughts stated, unstated or otherwise stated in the interpretations are well thought-out (*Uktānuktānām cintā yatra pravartate).*[20] It opens the underlying meaning of the text by breaking it syntactically, semantically and making illustrations helpful for rendering the text in an analytic way.

VI

Interpretation has got a defined meaning with the rise of hermeneutic circle in Euro-German thoughts and is considered as a method very relevant for uncovering the correct meaning of the text and for avoiding misconception caused by misinterpretations and, thus, correcting our understanding to comprehend the lively meaning of a text or expression in its contextual structure.

Gadamer takes interpretation useful for a revival of some thing, which had become alien and unavailable due to differences in language and in cultural setting. It is a method of deciphering text in a way that the meaning of a particular text (a part) is understood in the context of a whole. Equally, our understanding of the whole (unity of the meaning of the text as a whole) depends upon culminating understanding of the part.

Dilthey thinks that in order to understand an expression we must systematically explore the context in which it stands. For example, in order to understand Spinoza's philosophy better, we have to keep the background of the rise of science and the conflict between different religious sects in 16th and 17th century Europe in mind.

Ricoeur takes interpretation as a work of thought that consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning. The text has multiple meanings and it is by interpretation that all meanings of the text is made manifest. He very nicely clarifies that polysemic character of the symbols leads to the thesis of plurality of interpretations that consequently leads to plurality of self-understanding.

Schleiermacher takes interpretation as the art of avoiding misunderstanding and thus unveiling the correctness of understanding. The basic presupposition of early hermeneutics is that interpretation is determined by the context of that which is to be interpreted but he minds the unity of hermeneutics not in context but in procedure of understanding. Totality is not in parts but the parts according to him exist for the whole.

VII

The brevity of the text is like an egg in which the complete body with all organs and colours of the peacock are inherent and are actualized when hatched. Bhartṛhari is a grammarian philosopher for whom the text is a concept, a complete unit of awareness and as there is no possibility of parts in a unit of awareness it is indivisible; it is by the analytic device through which the indivisible is interpreted for making it understandable to those who cannot understand the indivisible otherwise.[21] He considers grammar as the science of interpretation helpful for making the text understandable to those who can understand only through interpretation. He adopts remotely three ways for an interpretation of a text.

(*i*) As a grammarian philosopher, he provides the philosophy of interpretation of the Vedic injunctions and commandments by taking action as their central meaning. This method he applies with regard to the interpretation of different grammatical concepts also.

(ii) As a philosopher of language, he accepts all words as concepts. When he takes a concept for interpretation, he puts forth different interpretations of the concept popular at his time. He puts those theories in a way to observe as to how far those interpretations are skillful in approaching the concept as popular in usual communication and that what problems regarding the concept are left unnoticed or to unveil the problems those theories are unable to meet with and, finally, he gives his own verdict.

(iii) Analysis of language and meaning by derivations. Out of them, I have discussed second and third ways of interpretation elsewhere.

Herein, I confine my discussion to the first that is the interpretation of Vedic sentences. Before coming to the discussion proper on interpretation, I take the privilege to say that meaning of all words for Bhartṛhari is universal. Individuals, in his scheme of interpretation based on the analysis of cognition as expressed or figured in the mind by language, are known by imposition of the universal on them with some similarity. In knowing individuals the cognition expressed by words, that is, universal expressed by language in the mind is a cognitive being that serves as the substratum of individuals. His acceptance of universal as the meaning of all word is significantly relevant for the genuine interpretation of Vedic acts in which some times the problem of individual, number, gender, the substitution of the material, the need of representative and ultimately non-violation of the Vedic act become very difficult to solve.

In Bhartṛhari's scheme of interpretation, we are not to bother much about searching the social and cultural life of the period the text came into existence. That is a futile endeavor because of the anonymity and eternity of the text. The text is an indivisible unit of awareness in nature articulated through sets of sentences that are divided, artificially, into subordinate sentences, compounds, words, roots and suffixes. What Bhartṛhari intends to elucidate is a universal criterion on the basis of which all the sentences may well be interpreted without any discrepancy and inconsistency; a criterion that is unalterable in spite of different cultural allegiances of the different interpreters; a criterion which at the same time accommodate the cultural milieu in which the text is expressed, that is which does not leave the question of the climate the text is expressed. Accordingly, the text expresses action. It is injunction for an act to do or not do or to do otherwise. Action is the central meaning of the text and that should be kept in the mind of interpreters to avoid committing misunderstanding regarding the reading of the text. According to Bhartṛhari,[22] the interpreters of the text sometimes insert their allegiances while interpreting the explanatory sentences of the text that results the differences of interpretations but with those alterations the text does not change. If there is deviation from the text in an interpretation that should not be eligible entitled an interpretation but an independent work.

In order to clarify Bhartṛhari's stand on interpretation of the text, I shall move with the example of the Vedic sentences that he has specifically interpreted in *Vākyapadīya.*

(a) Prescriptive Sentences (*Vidhi Vākyas*)

Let me take the Vedic sentence '*Khadire badhnāti*'[23] (he ties the sacrifice animal with the post made of catechu wood) first. Bhartṛhari provides with at least three interpretations of the sentence with the view that action is the central meaning of a sentence an account of which in the light of *Prakāśa* commentary of *Helārāja* may be given as follows:

(i) The meaning of the word '*Khadira*' is universal. Here, it denotes the capacity of the post. Any post fit for acting as the capable post may substitute the *Khadira* post for avoiding the violation of the action (sacrifice) in the absence of catechu post.

(ii) The context of the expression is sacrifice of animal for which the animal has to be tied to the post well tightly. *Khadira* wood has that fitness but in the absence of it any post fit for the action can be substituted.

(iii) The verb is the central word in the sentence as the meaning of words other than the meaning of verb qualify the later. In the sentence under consideration, 'ties' (*Badhnāti*) denotes an action and that has not to be violated in any situation. For keeping the action intact, a post made of any wood capable of trying the animal to keep its movement stop, be substituted.

Substitution of the post is not significant. The action that is injunction is of central importance. In all the three interpretations, we observe that Bhartṛhari concerns primarily for preservation of action that does not alter in any circumstance. In similar manner he thinks that the injunction like *Vrīhiḥ yajeta, Svargakāmo yajeta, Nityasandhyāmupāsīta,* and the sentences like *Kākebhyo rakṣyatām sarpīḥ,* etc. may be interpreted.

(b) Prohibitive Sentences (*Pratiṣedha Vākyas*)

In regard to the interpretation of sentences speaking prohibition let us see his treatment of the sentence *Brāhmaṇam na hanyāt*[24] (Do not kill a *Brāhmaṇa*.

(i) The word '*Brāhmaṇa* is applied in singular number, masculine gender, present tense and so one may say that the sentence does not prohibit the killing of other *Brahmaṇas* excluding one male of the present time. But that is quite opposed to the 'spirit of the sentence. According to Bhartṛhari, the word *Bhāhmaṇa* denotes universal that is the class of those belonging to austerity, penance and learning belonging to all the time of past, present and future. There is no specification of a particular number, etc., gender and, thus, the *Brāhmaṇa* class is prohibited from killing by the sentence.

(ii) It is not possible to decide the particular *Brāhmaṇa,* the killing of whom is prohibited and, thus, there is a case of indetermination of exclusion that leads to prohibition of killing of the *Brāhmaṇa* class.

(iii) Prohibition of killing (*na hanyāt*) is the central meaning of the sentence under consideration.

Similarly, other sentences of prohibition may be interpreted with the view that the action that is prohibited is the central meaning of such sentences.

In a correct and exact interpretation, the interpreters are required to have a clear view regarding using the synonyms and polysemes. According to Bhartṛhari, synonyms are all different words expresssive of their different meanings. It is only by overlooking the differences that they are taken to stand for the same substance or action. The text may be wrongly conceived if some word of it denoting some specific meaning is replaced by another word usually taken as a synonym of that word. Similarly, polysemes must be clearly interpreted in a way that the exact meaning of the text is not overlooked because that may mistake the understanding of the text.

Bhartṛhari is a holist. He always emphasizes the interpretation of the text on the basis of the cognition revealed in the mind by the text. The part should be interpreted in the context of the whole cognized by the text. Overlooking the cognition revealed in the mind by the text, the interpretation of the isolated sentences by analyzing them into words, roots, suffixes, and then by derivation of those parts may give a different meaning with which the text is not concerned. The parts must be interpreted in the view of the cognition of the whole as the ground of interpretation.

The interpreters must not infuse their allegiances with the text because in that case the interpretation may differ from the text. Interpretation stands philosophically interesting and relevant in view of it free from allegiances.

There are some specific rules that Bhartṛhari has discussed in case of determination of meaning of the words in a text that is sentence. As those rules are concerned with the determination of meaning that is they are not directly concerned with the concept of interpretation, I do not discuss those rules here.[25] However, it is worth-mentioning that *Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas* and *Mīmāṁsakas* have borrowed those originally Bhartṛharian rules as their general and specific rules of interpretation.

VIII

The meaning of the text, for Bhartṛhari, is revealed truth. It is non-contradicted verity and that is why authority in the matter of knowledge. It, for an interpreter serves as the cognitive ground of the device of interpretation through which an interpreter tries to make the text understandable to those who cannot understand it in other way. Thus, the theory of text provides a cognitive base not only for interpretation as a philosophical activity but estimates the language properly as a cognitive/revealed unit renderable into different garbs of different language speaking communalities. The purpose of interpretation is to open the text for the understanding of those who can understand it only through that way. The learning of different interpretation of a text provides with clarity and wisdom of the text. It excels one's understanding with the wisdom.

Notes & References

1. *Parāsarapapurāṇa* 18/2.
2. *Parāsarapapurāṇa* 18/3.
3. *Harivṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* 1/6.
4. for a detailed account see, *Mīmāṁsā Adhyāya 2, Pātha 4, Adhikaraṇa 2, Śākhāntarādhikaraṇa.*
5. The beginning letter of the term *'sumna'* is prolonged *(udātta)* in *Atharvaveda* that is why *Pāṇini* has written the aphorism *'devāsurayoryajusi kathake' Aṣṭādhyāyī* 7/4/38.
6. *VP*. 2/263.
7. *VP*. 2/255.
8. *VP*. 2/256.

9. *VP*. 2/267.
10. *Vārtika* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1/2/3.
11. *Vārtika* on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1/2/11.
12. *VP*. 2/258-260.
13. *VP*. 2/261.
14. *VP* & *Harivṛtti* on *VP*. 1/7.
15. *Manusmṛtiyāna* 4/36.
16. *Manusmṛtiyāna* 5, 17-18.
17. *Harivṛtti* on *VP*. 1/140.
18. *Ibid*. 1/140.
19. *Parāsaropapurāṇa* 18/17-18.
20. *Parāsaropapurāṇa* 18/19.
21. *Upāyāḥ śikṣamāṇānām bālānāmapalāpanāḥ. Asatye vartamani sthitvā tataḥ satyam samīhate. VP*. 2/238. .
22. *VP*. 1/6.
23. *VP* 3/ *Jātisamuddeśaḥ* verses 3-5 and Helārāja's and Raghunath Sharma's commentary on it.
24. *Vidhau vā pratiṣedhe vā brahmanatvādi sādhanam. Vyaktyāśritāśrita jāteḥ saṃkhyā jātirviśeṣikāḥ VP* 3/ *Jātisamuddeśaḥ* verse 18 and Helārāja's and Raghunath Sharma's commentary on it.
25. Bhartṛhari does not accept the theory of three independent powers namely *abhidhā* (expressive), *lakṣaṇā* (secondary) and *vyañjanā* (tertiary) in a word for interpreting different sorts of meanings a word expresses. For him, the word itself is a power and expresses all sorts of meanings by itself. Out of the meanings its popular meaning is known expressed directly by it. Apart from the expressive meaning a word expresses intended *(gauṇārtha)* and non-intended meanings *(nāntarīyakārthas)* also the meaning is clear to a listener if it is expressive but needs to be decided in case the expressive meaning is not conducive to a use. In that situation the meaning is decided on the basis of some rules a brief account of those rules follows thus –

    Rules for deciding intended or secondary meaning of the text –

    (i) Purpose, situation context and proximity with other words of the sentence *(Arthaprakaraṇaśabdāntarasannidhāna)*.
    (ii) On the basis of base and based factor (*Nimitta-nimitti*)
    (iii) More or less of the property of the object intended by the word (*Nyūnādhikyabhāva*).
    (iv) Similarity (*sādṛśya*).
    (v) Inversion (*viparyaya*).
    (iv) Figure and function (*Rūpaśakti*).
    (vii) Other grammatical operations.

    In case the secondary meaning is not intended in a use, non-intended meaning of the word is decided on the basis of following rules –

    (i) Inversion of primary and secondary meanings (*Guṇapradhānatāviparyaya*).

(ii) Non-expectancy of a part of meaning (*Padārthaikadeśavivakṣā*).
(iii) Non-expectancy of the complete meaning of the word a meaning close to the primary meaning is decided (*sakalapadārthavivakṣā*).
(iv) The implication of another meaning near to the primary meaning by keeping secondary meanings aside (*Uttarapadārthaparityāgenaivanyapadārthopala kṣaṇa*).

Apart from those specific rules Bhartṛhari has given a list of at least fifteen general rules for deciding the meaning of the word of a text. An account of them follows thus –

(i). Syntactical structure of the sentence (*vākyāta*), *(ii)* Context (*prakaraṇāt*), *(iii)* With the juxtaposition (*arthāt*) of the meaning of another word of the sentence, *(iv)* Propriety (*aucitya*), *(v)* Space factor (*deśa*), *(vi)* Time (*kāla*), *(vii)* Association (*sansarga*), *(viii)* Dissociation (*viprayoga*), *(ix)* Resemblance (*sāhacarya*), *(x)* Opposition (*virodha*), *(xi)* Indication at some places in the text (*linga*), *(xii)* Proximity with the next word (*Śabdāntarasannidhāna*), *(xiii)* Capability (*sāmarthya*), *(xiv)* Gender (*vyakti*), *(xv)* Accent (*svara*).

12

Hermeneutics: Some Methodological Claims*

Satrughna Behera

The purpose of this paper is not to describe phenomenological-hermeneutical approaches but to examine and assess their relevance to and their implications for social philosophy. Moreover, it is *to propound*, with a focus on the 'philosophical hermeneutics' of Hang-Georg Gadamer, the thesis that *hermeneutics is indeed another way of doing political and social philosophy*. The *keyword* to this proposal is *linguisticality* (*Sprachlichkeit*). The concept of linguisticality incorporates the following five inseparably related themes: (1) language is intrinsic to humanity, human specificity, or the ecentric and ecstatic quality of *being* human, (2) it is inseparable from our conception of reality; since reality happens *with* and *within* language, language neither just refers to reality nor is just a mirror to reflect or represent reality, but rather it is congenital with reality, (3) correlatively, the dialogical (or intersubjective) structure of language as a privileged human phenomenon demonstrates reality itself as social construction and process, (4) language is the primary medium of human communication as well as the maiutic mediation between consciousness and the external world, and (5) it is an embodied phenomenon (e.g., language is a tongue). In addition to meeting these characteristics of linguisticality, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics proffers other features as well.[1]

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By 'philosophical hermeneutics', Gadamer intends to radicalize the tradition of hermeneutics, both exegetical and historical, from Schleiermacher to Dilthey as the method of Biblical exegesis and the distinctive method of the 'historical science' (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Gadamer explicitly and emphatically denies that his *magnum opus, Truth and Method* (1960), is a treatise on the methodology of the human sciences.[2] In it, he goes beyond 'methodism' or 'methodologism' (a fallout of the Cartesian turn to epistemology and the Cartesian preoccupation with method) and beyond the familiar, ongoing methodological controversy between 'understanding' and 'explanation'.[3] The fact that in *Truth and Method* the question of 'truth' precedes that of 'method', however, has a far-reaching consequence on the conduct of social inquiry. By 'radicalizing' hermeneutics or 'ontologizing' language, philosophical hermeneutics turns its attention to the universal structuration of language as the human mode of being in the world. This radical break with the 'methodist' tradition of hermeneutics began decisively with Heidegger's *Being and Time*[4] and continued with his rather ponderous quest for language as 'the house of Being' or, as Majorie Grene puts it, Being itself as 'the house of language'.[5] In the following pages, we will discuss the four interrelated themes of hermeneutics: (1) the aesthetic as paradigmatic to hermeneutics (Section I), (2) dialogue as speaking and speaking as dialogue on the basis of which hermeneutics may be characterized as a practical philosophy (Section II), (3) the notion of language as an embodied phenomenon in relation to the issues of *phronesis* and *techne* (Section III), and (4) hermeneutics as a new, unifying philosophy of science in opposition to scientific methodism or scientism (Section IV).

I

Trained as a Greek philologist, Nietzsche made aesthetic central to the critique of both the theoretical (the realm of 'pure reason') and the practical (the realm of 'practical reason') in the Kantian sense of the terms. In *The Birth of Tragedy,* the very first of his philosophical works and the unexpected turn of his 'scholarly' beginning, the young Nietzsche echoed the voice of Orpheus who moved 'a world in darkness': "It is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*". Music is for him one way to make the aesthetic intelligible and grasp it directly: "Quite generally, only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon".[6] Second, the aesthetic is also 'the will to power' that breaks suddenly the monopoly or monotony of established reality, and demands the transformation and transcendence of the given toward a new discovery of reality, the vital upsurge or, to use the fashionable French term, *decoupage* that Nietzsche called the transvaluation of all values. The aesthetics, in brief, is deconstructive. All deconstructionists wish to be Nietzschean at heart. Here, we define deconstruction exactly in the way it is described by Heidegger in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* as "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are de-constructed down to the sources from which they were drawn".[7] It is quite obvious, therefore, that deconstruction as the *leitmotif* of all 'crisis' for philosophers, is not merely a naysaying. For it is at once both 'destructive' and 'constructive'. By denying, they also affirm. The idea of the aesthetic as a deconstructive measure is compatible with hermeneutics as the *art* of interpretation for the simple reason that the latter is always a dialectical movement between transmission (continuity) and renewal (discontinuity) as well as between event and structure. We may say that interpretation always follows the old to fashion the new, that is, it is the *appropriation* of tradition. As Gadamer insists, and rightly so, interpretation is never merely reproductive but is always productive.[8] Moreover, interpretation as 'obedience' to tradition and authority is 'neither blind nor slavish'.[9] Here, it is doubly irresistible to compare hermeneutics as the interplay between transmission and renewal with Georges Bataille's dialectic of 'prohibition' and 'transgression'. First, Bataille sees transgression as overstepping what is prohibited. Second, he defines the aesthetic as the committed act of transgression *par excellence*. "In one respect, play and transgression come not singly, but every time joined in defiance of the principles presiding over the disciplined regularity of work".[10]

II

Dialogue is the conceptual centerpiece of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. By virtue of dialogue as 'parliamentary', participatory, and obviously communal with the augmentation of Aristotelian *phronesis*, hermeneutics may be said to be another way of doing political and social philosophy. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as social philosophy is the masterly appropriation at once of Plato and Aristotle.[11] Above all, it is a 'renaissance' of Plato's dialogues. In addition to its normal sense of 'rebirth', we may use the term *renaissance* because of its association with the cultural ambiance of the Renaissance. First, the Renaissance is the rejuvenation of Greek culture in Europe. Second, it is characterized by the power of language, that is, man in the Renaissance believed in the power of words as units of energy and in the power of transforming himself because he had the power of language.[12] Third, it is also the age when, as Walter Pater puts it so forcefully and concisely, "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music",[13] that is, when music is the 'consummate art' whose relevance and significance to the poetic as singing speech is evident.

For Heidegger, whose thought Gadamer follows closely, the poetic (*Dichtung*) is the paradigmatic mode of disclosing what *is*, that is, truth. What distinguishes the poetic from all other modes of art is its intrinsically linguistic character. 'The world of language', Gadamer notes, "is the most primordial poetry of being. The thinking that conceives all art as poetry and that discloses that the work of art is language is itself still on the way of language".[14] What, then, is poetry? How is it related to the center-piece of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics called 'dialogue'? In order to answer these two questions, we should consider two interrelated themes: (1) the structure of dialogue (or dialectic) as the *logic* of thinking and (2) dialogue as speaking and speaking as dialogue.

Plato's dialogue or dialectic was meant to be a conversational exchange of questioning and answering in order to determine the nature of the Truth, the Good, and the Beautiful. Unlike writing, which is compared by Plato to painting and condemned by him for emasculating memory, dialogue as speaking has the quality of an ongoing, dynamic, and open-ended process.[15] With Hegel, however, Plato's dialogue is made to stand on its head, that is, the conversational *praxis* is transformed into the logic of *theoria*. This inversion from *praxis* to *theoria* coincides with the transformation of speech into writing. For good reason, Jacques Derrida calls Hegel the 'first thinker of writing' (*premier penseur de l'ecriture*).[16] With Marx, the dialectic is reverted back to stand on its feet again: it becomes the logic of revolutionary *praxis*. Tacked on with it is Hegel's *eschaton* – for Hegel the *eschaton* of history is the State, whereas for Marx it is Communism.[17] This is why one is sympathetic to Hayden White who coined the term *diatactics* that replaces the term *dialectics* in order to avoid the transcendental overtone of Hegel, on the one hand and the ideological overtone of Marx, on the other. Diatactics, in brief, is neither 'hypotactical' (conceptually overdetermined) nor 'paratactical' (conceptually underdetermined).[18] For our purpose here we can appropriate Aristotle's conception of *phronesis* as dialectical in that it mediates the theoretical and the practical. Moreover, in order to justify language as an embodied phenomenon, that is, to affirm the *cohabitation* of man and the word, diatactics works like a cufflink between perception and conception. After all, we must remember that the verb *to conceive* is affiliated with the 'fertility' of the body in the process of thinking with language. Elizabeth Sewell bemoans the fact that *conception* has become an intellectual (i.e., disembodied) miscarriage. She writes that "The human organism thinks as a whole, and our division of it into mind and body is the result of overemphasis on logic and intellect in near isolation which has led us into so one-sided a view of the activity of thought, so gross an underestimation of the body's forms of thought and knowledge".[19] In opposition to the Cartesian dualism of mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*), we should say here that intersubjectivity presupposes intercorporeality. For, the society of men and women are no less a society of bodied souls than a society of soulless bodies.

Indeed, Plato wrote his dialogues which came after the invention of the Greek alphabet. However, his written dialogues were modeled after the structure of spoken words. For him, speech as dialogical 'parols' writing. His dialogues are patterned after oral poetry as the preliterate medium of communication. Twentieth-century research by such scholars as Milman Parry, Eric A. Havelock and Albert B. Lord has shown conclusively that Homer was an oral poet, and his poetry was oral poetry. Music, which accompanied oral poetry, too, facilitated memory and communication.[20]

Hermeneutics means to honor its patron saint Hermes and his sacred and magical canon of spoken language. The name of the god Hermes itself stems from *herma*, the mute stone monument which also corresponds phonetically to the Latin *sermo* (speech). He is a *hermeneus* (interpreter) in the sense of a 'linguistic mediator'. As the legend goes, Hermes was the inventor of language and the 'magician' of spoken words who was 'spellbinding'. According to the Homeric 'Hymn to Hermes', he invented the lyre out of a tortoise shell, the meaning of whose legend is synonymous with the discovery of the universe (uni/VERSE) as the sounding orbit.

Hermes, very much like Homer and Orpheus, was a singer or bard (*aoidos*) as well as a player of the lyre, i.e., a herald (*keryx*); he was a virtuoso of sound-making whose *kerygma* (message) was hired by and encoded in the sound of spoken words. The term *herald* is related to the Latin *Carmen* (song) and the Sanskrit *karuh* (to sing) and *karus* (bard), whose sole virtue scales the pitch of the 'signifying excellence of voice'. As the master of speech, Hermes was the messenger of Zeus; in his capacity as a herald he gave Pandora her voice. No wonder, then, this genuine Olympian was 'the friendliest of the gods to men'.[21]

Let us note three characteristics of Homeric oral poetry which are relevant to our argument on the structure of dialogue. First, in Homeric poetry, which is oral and auditory (i.e., acoustic), the mouth and the ear were the main organs of communication in contrast to the written words of literate societies, which rely primarily on the eye. In oral poetry, which was sung by bards or minstrels, speech and music were inseparable. They were integrated into the acoustic culture. Second, in oral poetry, composition is spontaneous performance. Even the term *composition* with reference to oral poetry, which is non-spatial and invisible and relies on auditory memory, is somewhat a misnomer. In this sense, oral poetry is radically different from written poetry, where composition and performance are not separated but occur simultaneously. For the oral poet the composition and the performance are simultaneous; the former is the latter. The oral poem is composed *not for* but *in* performance. Third, in the Homeric culture, the oral *techne* of poetry was the instrument of preserving the dynamic flow of a tradition or a way of life. The dynamic flow of this oral culture was preserved in the cornucopia of poetry, i.e., in its repetition, redundancy, and verboseness. The Homeric epic or a 'river song', as it is called metaphorically, constituted 'a body of invisible writing imprinted upon the brain of community'. Homer described the dynamic quality of metaphor indispensable to poetic language as a 'winged word'. The Greek *mousike* included poetry, drama, dance as well as music. It too was a *techne* that augments and amplifies the record and recall of significant speech for the transmission of a tradition or a way of life. Music – singing accompanied by a stringed instrument – is meant to augment the oral transmission of the tradition in its living memory or the living present. By augmenting – slowing down or retarding – the tempo of the oral transmission, music too aids the memorization or remembrance of the cultural messages contained in oral verses, which are by nature formulaic. Now we understand why the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, is the supreme ruler of the Homeric oral or acoustic culture and the guardian of the aesthetic delight of Homeric poetry whose words were sung. Above all, she is the mother of the Muses. It would be a grave mistake to regard memorisation simply as a palimpsest or the visual copying of the original (i.e., the engram theory of memory). Rather, memory as a temporal *relatum* preserves the past in which the temporal horizons of the past and the present are contemporaneous, i.e., the fusion of the two horizons. As a temporal *relatum*, memory interlocks or works like a hinge between the two profiles of time.[22]

'Hearing' and 'obeying' have the same etymological root, the Latin *obaudire,* to listen from below (i.e., 'obedience'). In German, too, there is a familial union of *horen* (to hear), *horchen* (to hearken), and *gehorchen* (to obey). Gadamer writes:

> It is the Greek word *oikeion,* i.e., that which pertains to the household, to the *oikos*. It is an ordinary expression for relatives and house friends, i.e., for all who belong to the household. *Oikos,* household, thus has the broad sense of an economic unit such as the Greek household characteristically was. But *oikeion* is just as much as expression for that place where one feels at home, where one belongs and where everything is familiar. We too have usages similar to the usage of the Greek *oikeion* which display this double aspect in the conceptual field of household. In German, *hoi oikieoi* is rendered as *die Angehorigen* and in abstraction from this normal usage we have come to speak of *das Angehorige,* meaning everything which pertains to the household and not only those people who belong to it.[23]

The *ecology* of a genuine dialogue, that is, the dialectic of speaking and listening can most fruitfully be constructed in terms of the concept of 'mood' (*Stimmung*) and 'attunement' (*Bestimmtsein*) – the two musically related terms. In *Being and Time,* Heidegger conceives mood as a primordial, existential character of man; it is the active-receptive centre of man in relating himself to the surrounding world. As a *factum brutum,* mood has *ontological* bearing because it is a basic mode of being human. As *Befindlichkeit,* it is the basic way of 'finding' ourselves in the world. Through it, we attune ourselves to the world. As disposition, mood is not just the sensitive and emotional side of human consciousness, but the essential nature of man. 'Mood', Heidegger writes elsewhere, "is never merely a way of being determined in our inner being for ourselves. It is above all a way of being attuned, and letting ourselves be attuned, in this or that way in mood. Mood is precisely the basic way in which we are *outside* ourselves. But this is the way we are essentially and constantly''.[24] In short, mood is the *tonality* of man as being in the world.

Dialogue is *praxis*. The fusion of hermeneutics and *praxis*, according to Richard J. Bernstein, is ''the most central theme in Gadamer's analysis of philosophic hermeneutics''.[25] Because dialogue as *praxis* is the centerpiece of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, it is *already* a practical (praxiological) philosophy. The thesis that Gadamer's hermeneutics is another way of doing social philosophy may be explained and defended by (1) hermeneutics as application (*subtilitas applicandi*) and (2) Gadamer's appropriation of Aristotle's *phronesis* for his hermeneutics. First, social philosophy is not an *applied* philosophy in the same way as engineering or computer science is said to be an *applied* science or mathematics because, for Gadamer, the idea of application is intrinsic to hermeneutics in that it does not come only after theoretical knowledge. Rather, the theoretical and the practical are codetermined by the idea of application as intrinsic to hermeneutics. Second, *phronesis* is practical and ethical knowledge necessary to the everyday conduct of man as a political and social being. Thus, it is distinguished from theoretical knowledge (*episteme*) and technical knowledge (*techne*). In *Moral Knowledge and Its Methodology in Aristotle* which discusses Aristotle's practical and moral philosophy with a focus on his conception of *phronesis*, J. Donald Monan brings to the fore the distinctive status of *phronesis* as moral knowledge, which is distinguished from procedures of rigorous or exact science. Moral knowledge originates not from a contemplative grasp of the good based on metaphysical elaboration and timeless immutability but rather in the concrete good a person brings to realization in his own everyday life-worldly *praxis*. Monan concludes:

> The reality of moral knowledge is rather a pre-philosophic 'given' in a double sense. As an *immediate* encounter with value in experiential conduct, it is pre-philosophic in the sense that it does not presuppose any systematic metaphysic of the good. But as a genuine encounter with value, it does invite one to seek its ultimate ground. More important, the features revealed in Aristotle's description of moral knowledge prescribe that the only method capable of seeking that ground is a reflective, phenomenological one.[26]

III

The fact that language is obviously an embodied phenomenon has largely escaped the philosophical attention it deserves. It is, I think, due to the predominance of the Cartesian dualism of mind and body in our thinking. There are exceptions, however. Phenomenology is one of them. For Heidegger, for example, the hand is peculiarly human. In addition to much of what is commonly known as handicraft, Heidegger stresses thinking itself as the inculcation of 'handicraft':

> ... the hand's gestures run everywhere through language, in their most perfect purity precisely when man speaks by being silent. And, only when man speaks, does he think – not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes. Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. Therefore, thinking itself is man's simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork, if it would be accomplished at its proper time.[27]

The eighteenth-century anti-Cartesian philosopher Giambattista Vico had an unusually keen sense of the anatomy of language. Not only does he define man as 'only mind, body and speech' but also he locates speech as standing somewhere 'midway between mind and body'. The universal principle of etymology, as he writes, is that ''words are carried over from bodies and from the properties of bodies to signify the institutions of the mind and spirit''.[28] Vico observes that we signify inanimate natural things in terms of metaphor from our body. Samuel Beckett is incontrovertible when he declares that in language as gestures the spoken and the written are identical.[29] Every language, as R.G. Collingwood notes, is a specialized form of bodily gesture and thus, the dance is the mother tongue of all languages.[30]

The main thrust of our discussion here of language as an embodied phenomenon is an attempt to challenge the postmodern condition of *disembodied* humanity enframed by the cybernation of knowledge and the computerization of society. All cyberneticists are indeed the last Cartesians. Gadamer is right and certainly offers a defensible position, when he distinguishes the practical from the technical. Bernstein, however, is critical of Gadamer's position when he says: ''*techne* without *phronesis* is blind, while *phronesis* without *techne* is empty''.[31] Bernstein's criticism of Gadamer, I think, makes sense only if *techne* today is read as *instrumentum* or instrumental facilitation. Here, Heidegger's insight into the question of technology is enlightening. The essence of technology, says he, is no longer technological.[32] That is to say, technology is no longer simply a means to human activity or the human *telos*. For it is not merely the application of mathematical and physical sciences to *praxis*, but is rather a *praxis* itself. As such, the traditional rationale of technology as *instrumentum* is obsolete. Nonetheless, we continue to justify the 'end' of technology in terms of this outmoded idea of *instrumentum*. In so doing, we still view technology as morally neutral and forget that in technology end has already been subverted by means. Langdon Winner calls this happening of technology 'reverse adaptation' in which "Technical systems become severed from the ends originally set for them and, in effect, reprogram themselves and their environments to suit the special condition of their own operation. The artificial slave gradually subverts the rule of its master".[33] In short, *phronesis* is subverted by *techne* in every realm of human activity. In the conceptualization of human action, this subversion reduces the rationality of action to the calculation of the most efficient means of achieving its goals in so-called 'problem solving'. No wonder, efficiency is the battlecry of every bureaucratic organisation and the standard bearer of everything we do in technocratic society.

IV

Gadamer, as already noted above, has repeatedly denied that his philosophical hermeneutics is a methodology for the human, historical sciences. Without doubt, however, it is a seminal contribution to the philosophy of the human sciences. By this denial, Gadamer means to affirm the primacy of hermeneutical ontology over any methodology whatsoever, the question of 'truth' precedes that of 'method' in that the nature of things determine an appropriate method, not the other way round. He means to reject *in toto* scientific methodism. In the following pages, we will, first, examine Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a critique of scientific methodism or scientism and second, more importantly, we will see how his philosophical hermeneutics works as a unifying philosophy of the sciences which converges with the postpositivist philosophy of science propounded by Thomas S. Kuhn, Stephen Toulmin, Mary Hesse, Michael Polanyi, Paul Feyerabend and others. This 'new' hermeneutics of science can be traced back to Vico who, unlike

Descartes, saw science as a human invention, an institution, or an 'academy' which has its own history. In view of science as a human institution, the scientist is no longer an ahistorical or objective spectator but a committed participant in the affairs and things the nature of which he seeks to understand.

There is no one who described the modern genealogy of scientism in a more penetrating way than Husserl who traces it back to Galilean physics. For Galileo and his heirs, the certainty of knowledge, scientific or otherwise, depends on the conceptualization of nature as a mathematical manifold: the *book* of nature is written in the *language* of mathematics whose letters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures. Cartesianism is the philosophical embodiment of mathematics as a universal science. According to Husserl, scientism is fallacious because it is foremost a conceptual garb (*Ideenkleid*) whereby what once was or was intended to be true in the mathematical formalization of nature as a *method* has gradually been taken or mistaken for reality itself.[34]

For Gadamer, the unity of the sciences is modeled after the human, historical sciences, while for scientism it is the model of the natural sciences based on the mathematical formalization of nature. For him, moreover, what truth means in the human, historical sciences has a grave consequence on philosophical hermeneutics. It is in his emphasis on historical consciousness and efficacy that we find the impact of the human sciences (especially history) on his philosophical hermeneutics. Its radicality lies in the assertion that the human sciences contribute to the self-understanding of philosophy itself. In this way, hermeneutics, with an emphasis on language as an institution, envisions the ultimate unity of philosophy, the sciences, and the humanities.

There is no single work in the contemporary philosophy of science which has aroused more interest and controversy in the last two decades than Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.[35] His theory of scientific paradigms, based on the social-scientific model of political institutions, is at odds with the positivist aspiration to establish a unified theory of knowledge based on the model of physics, (i.e., physicalism), even though, paradoxically, it was published as a monograph in the 'unity of science' movement under the auspices of logical empiricism. More importantly, Kuhn later acknowledged explicitly the role of hermeneutics or the hermeneutical method in the interpretation of the natural sciences.[36] He puts socio-historical consciousness back into the philosophy of science. Kuhn's analysis of science is intrinsically historical and psycho-sociological. The structure of scientific knowledge is sought from the historical development of science and in the context of an existing community of scientific practitioners. While Kuhn acknowledges the role of hermeneutics in the interpretation of science, Gadamer recognizes the role of history or historical consciousness in philosophical hermeneutics. In both instances, the centerpiece is history or historical consciousness which provides a point of convergence between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Kuhn's philosophy of science. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to hear that Gadamer mentions that Kuhn's aforementioned work supports his view and Gadamer regards it as further evidence of the 'universality' of the hermeneutical method or the universal applicability of the hermeneutical method to the sciences.[37]

In an attempt to clarify his position in response to his critics, Kuhn wrote in 1969 a postscript to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* In the concluding remarks there is a revealing passage whose idea has repeatedly been emphasized in his later writings: ''Scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all. To understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups that create and use it''.[38] For Kuhn, therefore, science is an institution whose essence, just as much as that of language as the medium of communication, is its socio-political dimension. Like language, science is a communicative act among its practitioners, and the acquisition of scientific knowledge is the product of this inter-communication. The importance of viewing science as an institution, in short, is essentially twofold. First, scientific knowledge is the product of a socio-political process, or what Kuhn calls a 'group' activity. Second, like language as the instrument of communication, scientific truth is not 'value-free', i.e., devoid of normative judgments with their focus on the ahistorical 'logic of explanation'. On the contrary, Kuhn insists that scientific theorizing always involves 'an inextricable mixture' of descriptive and normative judgments. In significant measure, Kuhn's view of scientific theorizing may be said to be an extension of Gadamer's view of dialogue as the primordial model and to represent the triumph of the *practical* (*phronesis*) over the *technical* (*techne*). In the final analysis, all science is a 'republic' *(res publica)*. As such, it is indeed a *political institution.* That is to say, this idea expresses the primacy of *phronesis* over *techne*. This idea also leads us to understand philosophical hermeneutics as another way of doing social philosophy. The idea of dialogue, in sum, is indeed an elemental elegy for social philosophy.[39]

Notes and References

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3. For recent discussions on the subject of 'understanding' and 'explanation' which have bearings on the method of hermeneutics, see Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971; Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation,* trans. Georgia Warnke, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984, and Stephan Strasser, *Understanding and Explanation,* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985.
4. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper, 1962.
5. "Merleau-Ponty and the Renewal of Ontology", *The Review of Metaphysics,* 29, June 1976, 621. "Heidegger calls language 'the house of Being'. One could *almost* say, contrariwise, that Being is the house of language".
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy,* trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1967, pp. 52 and 141. In *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, Allan Megill gives us a searching acount of the centrality of the aesthetic to Nietzsche's thought which

influenced Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida. For his brief discussion of the influence of Nietzsche's aestheticism on Gadamer, see pp. 20-25.

7. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 23.
8. The question concerning whether interpretation is reproductive or productive is closely related to three other major themes of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: (1) prejudgment or prejudice (*Vorurteil*), (2) the 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontschmelzung*), and (3) 'historically effective consciousness' (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*). In *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., is critical of the alleged historicism or relativism of Gadamer's hermeneutics.
9. *Philosophical Hermeneutics, op.cit.*, p. 34.
10. Georges Bataille, *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse, Geneva: Skira, 1955, p. 38. Although he does not pose 'play' in opposition to 'work', Gadamer treats the idea of play (*Spiel*) as central to the formulation of his hermeneutics based on the aesthetic.
11. "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response", in *Reader-Response Criticism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, p. 204.
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13. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, ed. Donald L. Hill, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960, p. 106.
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23. *Dialogue and Dialectic, op.cit.*, p. 18.
24. *Nietzsche, The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell, New York: Harper and Row, 1979, p. 99.
25. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, op.cit.*, p. 141.
26. J. Donald Monan, *Moral Knowledge and Its Methodology in Aristotle*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 90.
27. *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, pp. 16-17.
28. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch, unabridged, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 78.
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30. *The Principles of Art*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938, pp. 243-244. *Cf.* Curt Sachs, *World History of the Dance*, trans. Bessie Schonberg, New York: W.W. Norton, 1937, p. 3: "The dance is the mother of the arts. Music and poetry exist in time: painting and architecture in space. But the dance lives at once in time and space".
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13

Understanding, Interpretation and Language: A Reading into Heidegger's Hermeneutics

M. Parameshwaran

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), beyond any doubt was the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century. During his theological studies at the University of Freiburg (1909-1911) he was introduced to the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Important, but not-so-popular influence on Heidegger, is one of his theology lecturers, Carl Braig (1853-1923), who deepened Heidegger's understanding of the problem of Being. As a matter of fact, Braig's book, *On Being* (1896) contained many etymological explanations of Greek metaphysical terms as well as lengthy extracts from Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Suarez. It even carried the phrase 'the Being of beings' which is central to Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology.[1] Having been introduced to Brentano's work on Aristotle—*Manifold Meanings of Being*—while still at Constance, during his first semester at Freiburg, Heidegger encountered Husserl's *Logical Investigations,* a work that challenged him deeply. In 1923 he began writing *Being and Time* [hereafter *BT*], which was published in 1927. Following the path of Husserl, he rejects the traditional language of philosophy, and draws on the resources of his native German to coin his own philosophical vocabulary.

Heidegger saw his account of understanding as a revolutionary break from the traditional philosophical emphasis on problems about knowledge and on the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity. To understand this break it is essential to place his account of understanding and interpretation in *BT*, in the backdrop of traditional hermeneutics. From ancient period onwards, hermeneutics has been epistemological in character. It was a method to understand difficult texts. Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Hirsch and Betti of the modern period too hold that the text has a static objective meaning, which is identical with the intention of the author. Such an objective meaning is stable, and resides in the object (text) as the ideal object to be recovered by the interpreter. The interpreter takes the text as an independent object, detached from the subject. In order to arrive at the objective meaning of the text, the interpreter has to be guided by a method, which is hermeneutics. This approach to hermeneutics has been epistemological and strongly rooted in the Cartesian framework of subject-object dichotomy—subject juxtaposed to an object. With Heidegger, hermeneutics took an ontological turn, as a result of which understanding one's own being gained priority over working out a methodology of interpretation. To Heidegger, self-understanding is that which is 'primordial', the interpretation of text has only a secondary significance.[2]

According to Heidegger, the question of 'being' was originally discussed by the early Greeks but forgotten in the later Greek philosophy and contemporary philosophy. Distancing himself from this western philosophical tradition characterized by the 'oblivion of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*), in which Being (*Sein*) was conceptualized as 'beingness' (*Seiendheit*),[3] in *BT* he launches a new venture to clarify the meaning of Being or 'question of the meaning of Being' (*die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*), seen through the perspective of *Dasein*. This forms the backbone of his hermeneutic phenomenology.

Before Heidegger, hermeneutics was considered as merely one branch of philosophy, the one that analyses the phenomenon of understanding in contrast to other human activities such as knowledge or language. The highlighting feature of Heidegger's hermeneutics is his strikingly different conception of hermeneutics. Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as being-in-the-world[4] changes our understanding of understanding from a derivative phenomenon to the central feature of human experience, making philosophy itself hermeneutical. This hermeneutic turn of Heidegger should be construed as a Copernican revolution in the field of hermeneutics. David Couzens Hoy in one of his essays writes,

> The closing decades of this century have been marked by a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary exploration of the theory of interpretation and its practical implications. To speak of a revolution in the history of thought is perhaps too grand, but certainly there has been a general movement that can be called

> the 'hermeneutic turn'. This turn has taken various forms, including poststructuralist cultural studies, deconstructive literary studies, interpretive anthropology and social science, and critical legal studies. Of course, the specific turns taken in each of these fields are reactions to older ways of practicing each discipline. But in each the *emphasis* on interpretation is used as an antidote, usually to objectivistic conceptions of the discipline's methods. However, none of these particular turns would have been imaginable without a dramatic change earlier in this century, the change brought about in philosophy by Martin Heidegger in 1927 in *Being and Time.*[5]

Like Hoy, Charles B. Guignon too admires the diversity and scope of Heidegger's writings. He points out to the contribution of Heidegger's thought to a variety of fields like, phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty), existentialism (Sartre, Ortega Y Gasset), hermeneutics (Gadamer, Ricoeur), political theory (Hannah Arendt, the early Marcuse), psychotherapy theory (Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger, Rollo May), theology (Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich), as well as current postmodern and 'new pragmatist' trends.[6]

Hermeneutic turn effected by Heidegger can be looked at from two different perspectives. From the perspective of ontology, hermeneutics, which was epistemological and thoroughly entangled in the Cartesian dichotomy, received an ontological twist in Heidegger. From another perspective, the hermeneutic turn was effected in philosophy as a whole. To put it in the Heideggerian fashion, after the turn, it has become like, if at all philosophy should be done, it could be done only in the hermeneutic way.[7] Heidegger's hermeneutic turn starts showing itself more explicitly in Sections 31 and 32 of *BT,* where he makes interpretative understanding the central mode (existential) of *Dasein.* That is, understanding is no more a mere cognitive acitivity but an existential of *Dasein.*

With Heidegger, Hermeneutics has changed from the reconstructing of meaning to the very activity of understanding. Heidegger by considering the human being as being-in-the-world tactfully distances himself from the polemic of subjectivism and objectivism. He does away with Descartes' subject-object split. Heidegger argues that substance-based ontologies conceive as primary that which has the distinguishing quality of 'remaining constant' (*ständigen Verbleib*).[8] But, Heidegger has a dynamic understanding of reality. To him "possibility" is the key. So he took phenomenology as a tool for his philosophical enterprise.

To Heidegger, hermeneutics is not a method that he employs for his philosophizing; it is his philosophy. Referring to his use of the word ''hermeneutics'', Heidegger writes:

> I would like to start from the etymology of the word; it will show you that my use of the word is not arbitrary, and that it also is apt to clarify the intention of my experiment with phenomenology ... The expression ''hermeneutic'' derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*. That verb is related to the noun *hermeneus*, which is referable to the name of the god Hermes by a playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science. Hermes is the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny.[9]

Heideggerian philosophy can be said to have born of the marriage between Aristotle's ''question of being'' and Husserl's ''phenomenology''. Heidegger found the methodological tools for his venture in the phenomenology of Husserl. Husserl's influence on Heidegger becomes evident from this statement of Heidegger made during his 1923 course on Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity, ''My traveling companion in research was the young Luther and my model Aristotle, whom Luther detested. Kierkegaard gave me impulsions, and as for the eyes, it is Husserl who put them in my head''.[10]

Husserl worked out phenomenological method, and Heidegger made use of it in his own way and developed his *hermeneutic phenomenology*. Husserl and Heidegger had different understandings of phenomenology. To Husserl phenomenology means ''reflection'', but for Heidegger phenomenology represents ''a promise'', ''a possibility''—a possibility of thinking—rather than naming a method or identifying a school.

Heidegger writes: ''Its [phenomenology's] essential character does not consist in being *actual* as a philosophical school. Higher than actuality stands *possibility*. The comprehension of phenomenology consists solely in grasping it as possibility''.[11]

Heidegger did not use the expression ''Hermeneutic Phenomenology'' accidentally. In *On the Way to Language* he makes this explicit by explaining his usage. Heidegger traces its etymological meaning. Phenomenology literally means, ''*logos of phenomena*''. By going into the Greek roots, Heidegger comes out with the meaning for *phainomenon*, 'showing itself' and for *logos*, 'letting be seen'. The 'letting-be-seen' (*logos*) of the phenomenology of *Dasein* is nothing but 'interpreting' (*hermeneuein*). Thus, phenomenology becomes hermeneutic phenomenology. Though in the later writings Heidegger dropped the expression "Hermeneutic Phenomenology", he continued with his phenomenological exercises. Heidegger says, "That was done, [dropping the expression 'hermeneutic phenomenology'] not—as is often thought—in order to deny the significance of phenomenology, but in order to abandon my own path of thinking to nameless".[12]

Understanding

Heidegger's emphasis on 'understanding' as the basic existential of *Dasein* was the decisive turning point. Understanding refers to man's projective existence in the world. As existence is a thrown existence, *Dasein's* understanding is wellrooted in its temporo-historicality. The notion of understanding (*Verstehen*) in Heidegger is totally different. Understanding is no more conceived as a mere 'intellectual comprehension'. Understanding is not an achievement, but the capacity to be authentically itself, or authentic potentiality-for-Being. It is a potentiality for Being-in-the-world. In simpler terms, understanding stands for *Dasein*'s openness to the world, or the capacity to let the Being of itself and of the entities within the world be disclosed.

Heidegger states, " 'Understanding' in the sense of *one* possible kind of cognizing among others (as distinguished, for instance, from 'explaining') must, like explaining, be interpreted as an existential derivative of that primary understanding which is one of the constituents of the Being of the 'there' in general".[13] What he meant by understanding is not simply one form of cognition among others, but our most basic ability to live in and cope skillfully with our world. This ability must and will take into account that the features of the world changes constantly, and this constant change demands us to form different interpretations. As our projects and needs change, we will change our interpretations. For instance, sometimes we must interpret ourselves as students, sometimes as family members, sometimes as consumers, and perhaps sometimes as philosophers. Yet, Heidegger suggests that all these interpretations presuppose a primary understanding of the world that runs through them. Our shift from one interpretation to another at the appropriate moment is a sign that we do undersatand the world. So a change in interpretation is not necessarily a sign of lack of understanding, instead it shows that we cope up with the various demands of the world.

Interpretation

Understanding should not itself be taken as a mental operation that is distinct from interpretation. Understanding is itself always realized in interpretation, and is not a separate, prior operation that then gets reprocessed in a secondary operation of interpretation. Understanding functions concretely only as interpretation: "In interpretation it does not become something different, but instead it becomes itself".[14] Interpretation is the concrete working through of the possibilities projected by the understanding. That is, the concreteness of intelligibility that is tacitly understood provides the background against which specific interpretive actions make sense. Interpretation (*Auslegung*) can be clarified only in relation to 'understanding'. Interpretation is not an acquiring of a brand new knowledge, but a rendering explicit or clarification of what has already been vaguely understood. Thus, interpretation is based on, and is directed by understanding with respect to the 'in-order-to', which has the structure of something *as* something. The hermeneutical sight 'sees' what something is for, that it is in relation to oneself, it *sees* it *as* this something, as a car, as useful, as sad, etc. That which is disclosed in understanding is made to stand out more explicitly by illumining the 'as-which' (*als-was*). The as-structure is, thus, made more explicit in interpretation.

The circle of understanding is a dynamic one where preconceptions will either work out or fail. Heidegger himself had spoken of genuine understanding and cautions us to get beyond "fancies" and "popular conceptions".

One might ask, given this model, how to arrive at a true interpretation? Since interpretations involve possibilities and not simply facts, making a true-false distinction may not be the most pertinent one to use when judging interpretations. If at all an interpretation should be judged, it could be done only in the Heideggerian sense of truth as disclosure (*a-letheia*). At least here, truth cannot be used in its traditional understanding, for, interpretation may consist of more than simply those assertions that are uttered, since a good interpretation frees up the possibility of uttering many other significant assertions. So, interpretive understanding may be better judged by its meaningfulness. Heidegger invokes such contrasting normative terms as "authentic or inauthentic", "genuine or not genuine", and "transparent or opaque".[15]

Heidegger refers to *Auslegung* and *Interpretierung*, the two different German terms, which mean interpretation. *Auslegung*, the standard translation of which is ''interpretation'' with a lower case 'i', includes the everyday phenomena of ordinary skills like hammering, riding a motorbike or typing. Heidegger considers *Interpretierung* as a derived form of *Auslegung*, but obviously, he does not mean to denigrate *Interpretierung* since that is what *BT* is. An *Interpretierung* is a reflective working through of phenomena, such as is done in philosophy and philology.

Hermeneutic Circle

Heidegger has a radical understanding of hermeneutic circle. It is no more the circular relation between the 'part' and 'whole', as developed by Dilthey and followed by other hermeneuticians. Traditionally, the paradigm for the hermeneutic circle is the reading of a text, where the parts cannot be interpreted without an understanding of the whole, and the whole cannot be grasped without an understanding of the parts.

> Heidegger's hermeneutic ... avoids the traditional model of the subject as the knower standing over against what is to be known, the objective world. For Heidegger, *Dasein* and world are coterminus in understanding. Heidegger conceives of *Dasein* and world as forming a circle, and he thus extends the traditional hermeneutic circle between a text and its reading down to the most primordial level of human existence.[16]

In the ordinary conception, the process of knowledge takes place as a linear movement—a quantitative acquiring of knowledge, moving from the known to the unknown. Heidegger brought about a revolution from the implicitness to the explicitness of the same. It is not a vicious circle, since it is a movement from vagueness to clarity of the *differently same*—what is clarified remains still vague. Hence, hermeneutics is a going deeper into the same. It is by going into the *intensively deepest* that hermeneutics embraces the *extensively widest*.

To understand this better, in the place of the circle, a metaphor of an 'eternal tree' can be placed. If we are to assume the ''hermeneutic process'' as an ''eternal tree'', ''understanding'' to the growth of ''roots'' and ''interpretation'' to the growth of ''branches'', then, it implies that deeper the roots (understanding) go, wider and higher the branches (interpretation) spread. In other words, more the understanding, better the interpretation would be. This metaphor is chosen to show the simultaneity and dynamism involved.

All understanding is circular, says Heidegger, in the sense that ''Any interpretation which is to contribute [to] understanding must already have understood [fore-structure] what is to be interpreted''.[17] Thus, ''hermeneutic circle'' characterizes that all understanding must already have a context of intelligibility for any discovery to be made, or for any conclusion to be proved. The ''as-structure'' of interpretation is based on the ''fore-structure'' of understanding, which consists of 'fore-having' (*Vorhabe*), 'fore-sight (*Vorsicht*) and 'fore-conception' (*Vorgriff*). The fore-structure of understanding is the horizon, the hermeneutical situation, out of which something is *let be seen* (interpreted) as this something. Interpretation presupposes the fore-structure of understanding, which is nothing other than *Dasein*'s existence in the world. The world as the *already* of *Dasein*'s thrownness and the *not-yet* of its projection, is the horizon—the condition of possibility for interpretation. Such an interpretation takes place in *Dasein*'s existential dealing with the entities.

The insistence on the circularity of understanding raises the problem of whether one is always trapped within one's own assumptions, or whether there is some way to get out of the circle. The solution to this problem will depend on how ''getting out'' is construed. Heidegger, of course, believes that interpretations can correct their own inadequacies. He further grants that we do not simply prove things that we already know, or limit ourselves to ''popular conceptions''. Genuine primordial understanding will see that these popular conceptions or standard assumptions are hindrances to better ways of interpreting.[18] However, Heidegger has not explained clearly how fanciful interpretations and popular conceptions can be avoided. He says that the task is to check our prior understanding of the subject matter against ''the things themselves''.[19] To put it in short, on the Heideggerian account, any good interpretation should disclose something about both *Dasein* and the world.

Heidegger's Understanding of Language

In his famous essay ''Letter on Humanism'', Heidegger makes the famous statements: ''Language is the house of Being. In its home, man dwells''. Though in *BT* Heidegger did not dwell deep into the question of language, in his later works he moves more on the way to language. Heidegger was not only interested in the 'question of being' but was equally interested in 'language'. He himself acknowledges this in *On the Way to Language*, ''... I only know one thing: because reflection on language, and on Being, has determined my path of thinking from early on, therefore, their discussion has stayed as far as possible in the background''.[20]

BT distinguishes between two modes of language-use. In Section 33, Heidegger makes a distinction between the ''apophantic'' [or ''assertive''] use of language, on the one hand, and the ''hermeneutic'', on the other.[21]

Heidegger analyses three significations contained in the notion of assertion: pointing out, prediction, and communication. Although each of these forms has a different function, they share the quality of focusing upon a determined object of discourse.[22] When something is pointed out it is immediately approached from a particular point of view based upon the subject who is pointing, and possibly as well by the one to whom the pointing out is communicated. Predication serves to clarify and further determine the act of pointing out. Hence, Heidegger offers a general description of assertive language as ''*a pointing-out which gives something a definite character and which communicates*''.[23]

Assertive discourse represents the everyday mode of language that is indispensable for practical affairs. Heidegger does not attempt to challenge its validity as such, but rather seeks to uncover what remains presupposed and ''unthought'' in assertive usage. He argues that any such apophantic determining of an object in an assertion necessarily occurs within the framework of pregiven views and perspectives:

> When an assertion is made, some fore-conception is always implied; but it remains for the most part inconspicuous, because the language already hides in itself a developed way of conceiving. Like any interpretation whatever, assertion necessarily has a fore-having, a fore-sight and a fore-conception as its existential foundations.[24]

Assertive language, while essential for practical purposes, is incapable of elucidating its interpretive fore-conceptions. Assertive language is closely allied with the mode of apprehending things as ready-to-hand, that is, as objects determined by their utility within a specific means-ends scheme.[25] Just because the ends that govern it are both predetermined and, to a greater or lesser extent, covert or unconscious, assertive language has an obscuring effect. It does not permit a transgression of its interpretive frameworks or an inquiry into the manner in which they constellate objects. The most extreme form of such limitation and distortion is represented in idle talk, though it is not its only form. As apophantic discourse is founded on interpretation, Heidegger argues that hermeneutical language possesses ontological priority. ''The assertion cannot disown its ontological origin from an interpretation which understands. The primordial 'as' of an interpretation (*hermeneia*), which understands circumspectively, we call the existential-*hermeneutical* 'as' in distinction from the *apophantical* 'as' of the assertion''.[26] It is in this sense that the apophantic use of language may be said to be ''derivative'' of the hermeneutic. Hermeneutical language inquires into the manner or mode in which things are grasped as this or that, that is, into the frameworks governing the disclosure of beings.

It is significant that Heidegger speaks of an existential-*hermeneutical* ''as'', thereby indicating that the form of interpretation to which he refers, has to do with being-in-the-world. The hermeneutical ''as'' articulates the modality of our existence and relationships. As Otto Pöggeler has stated, ''The hermeneutic 'as' ... is proper to our concernful dealing with what is''.[27] Hermeneutical language is relevant to our care, to the modes in which we understand and relate to others. It probes beneath the surface of the ontically given, and provides a means of disclosing and potentially transforming the manner in which our relations are interpretively constellated.

After *BT*, the distinction between hermeneutic and assertive language-use receives no further attention. However, it remains informative for the subsequent development of Heidegger's thinking concerning language. For the most part, he tends to ignore the more immediate aspects of language as they are manifested in everyday communication. For Heidegger—especially the later Heidegger—language should be understood in the sense of ''*legein* (logos)'' which literally means, ''letting-be-seen''.[28]

Heidegger emphasizes that hermeneutics has to do with the disclosure of being, rather than with the merely technical processes of textual exegesis. This is based on the understanding that being-in-the-world is itself linguistic. ''Language has the task of making manifest in its work the existent, and of preserving it as such''.[29] The extrapolation of hermeneutical inquiry beyond the technical rules of exegesis, and turn to language as relevant to ontological-existential concerns, is highly significant. Yet Heidegger's explicit statements concerning hermeneutics indicate neglect of the relationship between the epistemological and disclosive nature of hermeneutics and its more traditional function in relation to texts. Conversely, in practice Heidegger participates extensively in textually based hermeneutics as a means of pursing ontological inquiry.

That is to say, language is not simply a human ''product'' or ''tool''. The most obvious sense of this is that language is not the product of the individual; it is historical and cultural by nature and, therefore, transcends any instance of individual use. As Cassirer points out, "Language arises not in isolated but in communal action ... Language as a *sensorum commune* could not grow out of the sympathy of activity".[30] The communal or collective development of language through the course of time also indicates its *historical* nature. Heidegger argues, "all language is historical", emphasizing that this is the case "even where man does not know history in the modern European sense".[31] The cultural and historical character of language means that it shapes the worlds inhabited by human beings. It is formative of the matrices within which the individual lives and is shaped.

In other words, the development of language in the course of cultural-historical activity is formative of the subjects who engage in that activity. "The ability to speak is what marks man as man. This mark contains the design of his being ... Language, in granting all this to man, is the foundation of human being".[32]

"Language, then, is not a mere human faculty".[33] It transcends the human as such and grants access to the relational modes in which worlds have been disclosed, that is, language grants access to ontological inquiry. To put it in the words of Heidegger, "Language is the precinct (*templum*), that is, the house of being".[34]

The fact that language is formative of modes of being, and opens the possibility of transforming those modes, indicates, for Heidegger, the need for a "listening" to language.[35] This allows for an exposure to alterity that expands and enhances our understanding of what is, allowing a release from closed ontic modes. Listening means being open to the aspects of language that surpass subjectively intended uses. It means attending to the non-literal, suppressed, and "unthought" dimensions of works, texts and traditions. Heidegger attempts such forms of listening in his readings of poets and philosophers, but he neglects many of the technical considerations that are essential to hermeneutic endeavours.[36]

Language, in any of its forms, is not transparent in its meaning, but rather is polysemous, frequently obscure, and lends itself to multiple interpretive disclosures. Indeed, the anisotropic nature of language parallels the nature of Being and allows for the transcendence of closed ontic interpretations. However, this semantic pluralism, its relationship to interpretive perspectives and the conflicts of interpretation, which this produces are issues not fully addressed by Heidegger. We can conclude by saying that Heidegger's work indicates the relationship between Being and language but neglects the specifically hermeneutical considerations that arise from this relationship.

Notes and References

1. For an account of the parallels between the contents of this book and Heidegger's thinking, see John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1982, pp. 45-57.
2. Realizing the imortance Heidegger gives to 'Being', Ricoeur aptly characterizes Heidegger's hermeneutics as the 'hermeneutics of Being'. Though, to Heidegger, self-understanding or understanding one's own self is primordial, it is not a metaphysical self.
3. In the metaphysical tradition stemming from Plato and Aristotle, Being has been understood as 'static presence' or as 'static permanence' (*Anwesenheit*, which carries the word *'Wesen'* meaning 'essence', equivalent to the Greek *ousia*). Heidegger, on the contrary, sees human existence as essentially temporal and dynamic.
4. Being-in-the-world is a unitary phenomenon, but it should not be understood as if humans are in the world as tables and chairs are in a room. Rather, humans dwell in the world, and are concerned about the projects within, but often in such a way that they are completely absorbed in them and no longer notice the world at all.
5. Charles B. Guignon, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 170. [Hereafter *CCH*].
6. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
7. In *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer develops his philosophical hermeneutics grounding strongly on the universal nature of hermeneutics.
8. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., Macquarie and E. Robinson, New York and Evanson: Harper and Row, 1962, p. 125. [Hereafter *BT*]. This static approach is prevalent with respect to the meaning of the text, which was identified with the intention of the author by the pre-Heideggerian hermeneuticians. But to Heidegger, every text should be subjected to multiple readings, for, only by subjecting a text to multiple readings the 'unthought' element will be facilitated to reveal itself. This notion of subjecting a text to polysemic readings gets highlighted in Ricoeur's Critical Hermeneutics.
9. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans., D. Peter Hertz, San Francisco: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1982, pp. 28-29. [Hereafter *WTL*].
10. Martin Heidegger, *Vortrage und Aufsätze*, Pfullingen: Neske, 1954, p. 99.
11. *BT*, pp. 62-63.
12. *WTL*, p. 29.
13. *BT*, p. 182.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
15. For a detailed account of these terms see Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991, Chapter II.
16. *CCH*, p. 172.
17. *BT*, p. 194.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *WTL*, p. 7.
21. It should be noted that this differentiation does not parallel with that made by Ferdinand de Saussure between *Langue* and *Parole*. Saussure differentiates between the systematic and structural nature of language as a whole (*Langue*) and the specific utterances or instances of linguistic expression (*Parole*). Heidegger, however, differentiates between two modes of discourse that are operative on the level of *Parole*.
22. *BT*, pp. 196-98.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 199. Emphasis Heidegger's.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-01; and *cf.* Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969, p. 138.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
27. Otto Pöggeler, ''Heidegger's Topology of Being'', in *On Heidegger and Language*, ed., Joseph J. Kockelmanns, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 111.
28. For a more comprehensive treatment of this topic please refer to William J. Richardson, S.J., ''Heidegger and the Origin of Language'', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 3, 1962, pp. 404-16.
29. Calvin O. Schrag, *Experience and Being*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969, p. 275.
30. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. I, *Language*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New Havan: Yale University Press, 1955, p. 286.
31. *WTL*, p. 133.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
33. *Ibid.*, 107.
34. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, p. 132.
35. *WTL*, p. 124.
36. Paul Ricoeur realizing this shortcoming in Heidegger's hermeneutics highlights the importance of *'techne'* in his critical hermeneutics. For a more detailed treatment, refer to Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. & trans., John B. Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

14

The Implication of Tradition and Understanding in the Hermeneutic Ontology of H.G. Gadamer

T.K. Badrinath

> "Understanding a tradition ... undoubtedly requires an historical horizon. ... the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present than there are historical horizons. Understanding, rather, is always the fusion of horizons we imagine to exist by themselves".
>
> H.G. Gadamer in *Truth and Method*

1. Aim

The focus of the paper is to discuss the hermeneutic ontology of Gadamer in the background of tradition and understanding. Gadamer made a significant contribution to the field of hermeneutics. He has used hermeneutics as a method of understanding the philosophical texts. As a hermeneutical thinker, Gadamer explained the need to preserve and appreciate tradition. It is through the concept of tradition that he tries to explain the role of interpretation and understanding.

Hermeneutics as an interpretation theory plays an important role in the writings of Gadamer. He owes a great deal to Heidegger. Gadamer uses hermeneutics as a methodological device in interpretation, which considers a whole in relation to its parts and *vice versa.* While explaining the hermeneutic circle as a movement which is back and forth, between part and whole, Gadamer holds the view that the criterion of correct understanding lies in the harmony between the whole and the parts. It is precisely because of this fact that understanding must always anticipate the completeness of the text. This is a very significant fact because we can understand the parts of the text only if we understand the whole and similarly the understanding of the whole becomes complete only by understanding the individual parts. The hermeneutics of Gadamer will be studied on the basis of (1) tradition and (2) interpretation and understanding. Since this is possible only through the medium of language, in the hermeneutic study of Gadamer, language also plays an important role. All these aspects shall be discussed in the paper. The methodology to be adopted in this paper is a critical one. In the postmodern tradition, the notions of tradition and interpretation have been questioned. The concept of tradition has to be evaluated in general for the progress of man. Thus, the methodology that is to be adopted in the paper is not merely a descriptive one, but an evaluative one.

2. Hermeneutic Ontology of Gadamer

One of the important aspects that Gadamer emphasizes is the engagement with tradition. For Gadamer, one can understand the value and importance of tradition and heritage by living with other persons. Life develops with others in culture, time and place. Man's life, knowledge and understanding are connected with the tradition and heritage. Knowledge and experience of one tradition is carried over to the other by means of history. The historian is concerned with the whole of historical tradition, which he has to combine with his own present existence, if he wants to understand it. The cumulative result of the extended process of learning and testing constitutes tradition. Tradition is the locus of our understanding. It helps us to correct the mistakes of the present. We are shaped by our past in various ways and this has a tremendous influence on our understanding. The past and the present are related and become a continuous process through tradition. *In Truth and Method*, he is concerned with the fundamental condition involved in understanding. In history, we are already in tradition even before we are conscious of it. History does not belong to man, but man belongs to history.

3. General and Special Hermeneutics

In the hermeneutical understanding of Gadamer, a distinction between general and special hermeneutics is made. Gadamer's concern is with the general hermeneutics and his primary interest is to know the understandability thesis. Commenting on this, in one of his famous essays, "The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem", he says: "... the central question of the modern age is ... how our natural view of the world—the experience of the world that we have as we simply live out our lives—is related to the unassailable and anonymous authority that confronts us in the pronouncements of science''.

Gadamer was mainly concerned with understanding which works in our encounter with and participation in a cultural tradition—something which is prior to any systematic hermeneutic investigation. This method of understanding is not a matter of unprejudiced appropriation of a text, but a fusion of one's own horizon of meanings and expectations with that of the text. Thus, it is clear that the aim of hermeneutics, according to Gadamer, is not to offer a different methodology of understanding. He is concerned with the processes, which precede and underlie interpretative methods. He says: ''The hermeneutics developed here is not a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of the world''. But one common objection to the Gadamerian notion of the recognition of authority in tradition is that it undermines both our freedom and creativity. But this objection is not a valid one because Gadamer's intention is not merely to emphasize the authority of tradition but to explain how it shapes our thinking in the process of understanding. Tradition is what is transmitted and handed down from the past and remains as a possible source of truth. Tradition does not tie us down. It is something we carry forward in a modified form. Also, it must be kept in mind that he was not against questioning the tradition. In fact, he saw this questioning to be a matter of mind or of understanding. All our prejudices arise due to the fact that we ourselves stand within a tradition. Tradition is not something rigid; it is not something that is fixed once and for all. Gadamer, who allows a critique of tradition, is always in favour of renewal and reinterpretation of tradition and thus tradition becomes a truly living vision.

4. Historical Development of the Problem

Hermeneutics has been used in the eighteenth century to refer to the interpretation of texts. Though initially it was used in religious writings, later it was extended to linguistic understanding. For example, it was Schleiermacher who used hermeneutical method in theology and defined it as the art of avoiding misunderstanding. Savigny, Boeckh, Steinthal and Dilthey developed the method of Schleiermacher. Dilthey, who was the historian and the biographer of Schleiermacher, stressed that there is no presuppositionless understanding. Understanding was the foundation of human sciences according to him. Later, Heidegger explained the need for all interpretation to rise from a previous understanding. He openly refuted the idea that understanding can be presuppositionless. "All interpretation is grounded in a fore-sight, and a fore-conception", says Heidegger. His work *Being and Time* gives a broader approach to the hermeneutical movement. An interpretation is always tied to a situation to which the text speaks. Similarly, how the text is interpreted is determined by its situation. But it was Gadamer who has generated a lively debate with the publication of the book *Truth and Method*. Hermeneutical method is universal, because understanding is the fundamental way in which human beings participate in the world. Gadamer has been very much inspired by Heidegger on a number of points. His views on language, that all understanding comes into its own in interpretation, and interpretation is based on fore-having or pre-possession, fore-sighted pre-conception—all these are derived doctrines of Gadamer from Heidegger. Gadamer ties all human experience of meaning to language. He states that it is in language that we articulate the experience of the world insofar as this experience is common. Man must know the eternal values and the meaning of life. Often he forgets the purpose and meaning of his life, because he plunges deep into the temporal aspects of things and believes what is unreal as real. Gadamer states that each person ought to seek and realize the values and goals, for their harmony of measure and fullness would point the way to mature and perfect human formation. "Hermeneutic experience is the corrective by means of which thinking reason escapes the prison of language and it is itself constituted linguistically", says Gadamer. He supports the view that the process of interpretation is a circular one, involving the movement from the parts to whole and whole to the parts. This means that in order to understand the meaning of a sentence, the parts, namely, the meaning of individual words is to be understood. Similarly, in order to understand the meaning of a paragraph, we need the understanding of individual sentences, we require an understanding of the language. Thus, Gadamer stresses that language is interwoven with sentences and words, and understanding is possible only through the implicit relation between the whole and parts.

5. Gadamer's New Methodology for Hermeneutics

Gadamer differentiates himself from his predecessors like Schleiermacher, Dilthey and others by emerging as a critique of the tradition viewed earlier and its methodological coneption of understanding. For Gadamer, the cultural tradition is important because it is the locus of understanding. Gadamer believes that it is tradition, which plays a vital role in our understanding. The character of the people and the circumstances in which we find ourselves have been shaped, moreover, by past events and the cumulative interpretation of their meaning we call our ''tradition''.

Understanding and interpretation are indivisible. ''Understanding and interpretation are indissolubly bound up with each other'', says Gadamer. Understanding is not outside tradition, and it always belongs to tradition because it involves self-application. All understanding of tradition is self-application. It is understanding that makes history, according to Gadamer. Thus, he reverses the position of Hegel according to which, history belongs to understanding. Gadamer has taken this position because understanding contributes to and belongs to the onging course of history.

For Gadamer, the notion of hermeneutics can be better understood in terms of the relationship between language and interpretation. Habermas correctly says that with Gadamer, language acquires a third dimension. Language exists only as something traditional, for tradition mirrors language. Language is said to be the medium of hermeneutical experience. Hermeneutical problem is not one of the correct mastery of language but the proper understanding of that which takes place through the medium of language. Language is the middle ground in which understanding and agreement concerning the object take place between two people. All knowledge of ourselves as well as of the world comes to us through language. For Gadamer, language is not a mere tool we use, but something which precedes us and whose play we submit to. We can only think in terms of language. Language grows with thought, or rather thought grows with it. In the ultimate analysis, they may be identical. Language speaks to us, rather than we speak it. In language, we are always already in language, even before we could analyze or speak about things. Heidegger's statement that language is the house of being is echoed in Gadamer's statement, ''Being that can be understood is language''. For language is not only an object in our hands, it is the reservoir of tradition and the medium in and through which we exist and perceive the world. It is language that bridges both the knower and the known, and hence, Gadamer speaks of it as a ''fusion of horizons''.

Gadamer's significant contribution to philosophical hermeneutics lies in the hermeneutic circle, which calls for a movement from parts to whole and *vice-versa*. In other words, for understanding of a paragraph one must understand the individual sentences, which requires an understanding of individual words which in total requires an understanding of the language. Thus, the relation between the whole and the part is an inevitable aspect in any understanding. Another significant contribution of Gadamer is that he stresses that the interpreter has more advantages than the author because the meaning of the text goes beyond its author. Understanding thus is always productive and rarely reproductive. This means that we understand *differently* if we understand at all. This led him to reject the notion that meaning of a text is something fixed or tied to the author. This certainly cannot be the case. Since our prejudices differ from that of the past, new meanings occur accordingly. As there is no one fixed meaning that is tied to the text by the author, the interpreter always gains new meaning. Thus, the notion of understanding and interpretation acquires a fresh and new look with Gadamer.

6. The Notion of Understanding and Language

The central question of Gadamer's investigation is regarding the nature of "understanding", particularly as this is revealed in humanistic study. All understanding is interpretive and hermeneutical in nature. Understanding is, according to Gadamer, linguistic and dialogical. Gadamer locates the conditions of understanding the meaning, whether textual, aesthetic or historical, in the traditions to which the interpreters belong and in the authority of those traditions. For him, understanding is essentially open, but there is also a risk. To understand is to reconstruct, in a disinterested fashion, the meaning of the text according to its author.

The understanding and interpretation of texts is not exclusively a concern of the human sciences, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. In Hirsch's view the correct interpretation of anything must be the one that grasps a single meaning with which everyone can agree. But the only standard on which all readers will agree in attempting to determine the correct interpretation "is the old-fashioned ideal of rightly understanding what the author meant". The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science – yet it too is concerned with knowledge and with truth. In understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired and truths known.

The hermeneutic problem is universal and prior to every kind of interest in history because it is concerned with what is always fundamental to "historical questions". What is historical research without historical questions? The hermeneutic interest of the philosopher begins precisely when error has been successfully avoided. Hence, what is affirmed here is that the province of hermeneutics is universal and especially that, language is the form in which understanding is achieved. According to Gadamer, the term "hermeneutics" is retained not in the sense of a methodology but as a theory of the real experience of what thinking is. Hermeneutics has traditionally understood itself as an art or technique.

In the circle of hermeneutics is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. We genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.

Gadamer contends that all correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought. It must direct its gaze "on the things themselves". For the interpreter to let himself be guided by the things themselves is obviously not a matter of a single, "conscientious" decision, but is "the first, last, and constant task". Gadamer insists that texts do not have meanings in themselves; meaning arises only in the happening of understanding. There is always something undecidable in the happening of understanding and interpretation. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations with regard to a certain meaning. Interpretation does not merely take place in the medium of language; interpretation deals with linguistic forms and by transforming these forms into its own understanding, it carries the form to understanding. When we understand something, we come to some truth about it.

This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation. The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust. Actually, "prejudice" means a judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined. In German legal terminology a "prejudice" is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached.

Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditional text and has or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which the text speaks. Understanding begins, when something addresses us. Understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event. Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present.

In the process of understanding, a real fusion of horizons occurs, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded. To bring about this fusion in a regulated way is the task of what is called historically effected consciousness. Understanding is always interpretation, and hence, interpretation is the explicit form of understanding. The general requirement of hermeneutics is, rather, that every text must be understood according to the aim appropriate to it.

Interpretation is necessary where the meaning of a text cannot be immediately understood. To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were. Rather, language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting.

The essential relationship between language and understanding is seen primarily in the fact that the essence of tradition is to exist in the medium of language, so that the preferred object of interpretation is a verbal one. Thus, for Gadamer, written texts present the real hermeneutical task. Writing is self-alienation. Overcoming it, reading the text, is thus the highest task of understanding.

15

Translating Texts and Hermeneutics: Kabir in Tagore's Translation*

Manjulika Ghosh

I

Contemporary hermeneutic literature has a whole set of terms such as linguistic competence, communicative discourse, understanding, interpretation, author's intention, reader's response, etc. Other terms that crop up alongside interpretation and understanding are explanation and reconstruction. The relationship works both ways. As we interpret we explain, and explanation can be an element of interpretation. Again, we hermeneutically reconstruct the text in terms of all evidences, internal or external to the text concerning relevant aspects in the author's outlook and horizon which would include the author's pre-possessions, cultural environment and the literary and generic conventions available to the author during the period he was writing as also the style and category.

Communication of texts, transforming them from one language to another, takes place through the act of translation. Translation is one of the connotations of the Greek verb *hermeneui*; the hermeneutic activity has its source in *translating* the idioms of gods to mortals. Hence, translation of a text cuts across the above processes of understanding, interpretation, etc. Translation is part of the appropriation of a culture, and as such becomes the vehicle of hermeneutic activity, a praxis involving the dialectical integration of understanding, interpretation, reconstruction and application to privilege the target language and culture. The more explicit and familiar issues of translation, e.g., word-for-word or sense-for-sense is now less significant than the intellectual and institutional contexts surrounding those issues and affecting their meaning in any given instance, such that the meaning of the original text does not become either elusive or reductive.

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* A remote ancestor of this paper was presented in the South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg in 1999 on the occasion of the 600th Birth Anniversary of Kabir.

Translation is not only inter-textual but also inter-lingual. This gives rise to the problem of the translation of any text in a vernacular language or a foreign language. A difficulty was faced in translating Greek terms in Latin. There was a similar problem in translating Sanskrit terms in English. This brought about a revolution in thought. This is precisely what hermeneutics is all about. If we take the basic terms within a culture and compare them with those of other cultures, we will not find many close correspondences. Translating English into one of our vernacular languages poses the same difficulty as translating from Sanskrit to English, from Sanskrit to German and so on. Mistakes have been made, and they have misled people not only in translating individual concepts and terms but in translating whole systems of thought. Translation often gives rise to enormous howlers. Here is the problem of coming to terms with the otherness of language. In this connection, Walter Benjamin quotes Rudolf Pannwitz who writes:

> Our translations, even the best, proceed from a false premise. They want to Germanize Hindi, Greek, English instead of hindi-izing, grecizing, anglicizing German. They have a much greater respect for the little ways of their own language than the spirit of the foreign work. The fundamental error of the translator is that he maintains the accidental state of his own language, instead of letting it suffer the shock of the foreign language.[1]

However, as the theory of translation stands today, the problem is not how to produce a well-wrought translation but rather the dynamics and vicissitudes that govern cross-language cultural exchange and creative translation. Hence, a distinction is called for between informative and creative translations. According to the former, the purpose of translation is only accurate transformation of information. A translator concerned with this task is to be contrasted with a creative one who conceives his or her task differently. For him/her, translation and interpretation are conceived nearly as equivalent practices and innovations come to be understood as a hermeneutic performance. It is not just that a faithful, translation is not fully possible, it is not also particularly desirable. Translation of texts, if it is not going to be a paraphrase, becomes intelligible to us only if a 'living' meaning is retrieved. Commonality of meaning conceived as some kind of absolute or immanent meaning shared across languages is substituted by active interpretation and 'aesthetic' perception of the original text. And the 'aesthetic', we know, is a constitutive element in the discourse of hermeneutics. It is to be noted that majority of translation theorists in the 19th and the 20th centuries are hermeneutists or closely connected with the movement. Writers like Humboldt, Schlegel, Schleiermacher and their descendents, Gadamer and Derrida – all have something to say about the nature of translation process or are interested in it in one way or other. According to Gadamer, "Reading is already translation ... The process of translating comprises in its essence the whole process of human understanding of the world and of social communication".[2] Moreover, translation as message transfer and message exchange also involves the problem of interpretation. There may be an infinite possibility of interpreting any literary creation and works of art, leaving open an unlimited interpretable and cultural horizon of message exchange. So there arises the need to have recourse to some order, some method. Is not this very close to what hermeneutics have always done?

A second problem of translation having to do with hermeneutics arises when the translator/interpreter is being farther removed in space and time from the text. How is the distance between the past and the present to be resolved? Is there some continuity between the past and our present perception of it? Or do the translations in the shape of interpretive practices approach the texts as if they were contemporary, and in that process transpose them from one horizon to another? Should there be cross-language cultural exchanges that stem either directly from or relate indirectly to a pragmatically contextualizing approach towards translations that highlights the translator's situational relevance in the target culture's context rather than debating the more limited issue of actual veracity and precision of translation? For a translator interested in a medieval text these challenges are indeed real. We shall approach these and related questions using as an example a study of Rabindranath Tagore's translation of the medieval saint-poet Kabir's songs.

II

Rabindranath Tagore's translation of Kabir was published in February, 1915, two years later to his winning the Nobel Prize. In the meantime the literary world has grown accustomed to Tagore's image of a mystic and the charm of his mellifluently cadenced prose, biblical in simplicity, and direct in appeal as of a reed filled with music. But the publication of *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*[3] came as a rude shock to many. Ezra Pound, poet and critic and one of Tagore's literary admirers was filled with dismay.[4] He said that Tagore had acted unwisely in publishing his Kabir and staked his reputation. Pound found in Kabir, rather Tagore's Kabir, a more virile poet than Tagore, and that, compared with the medieval poet, Tagore's craft and verse should dwindle into insignificance. He further observed that people who were familiar with *Gītānjali*, *The Gardener* and other verses translated from Bengali to English would become skeptical of Tagore's originality. They might think that Tagore had borrowed his ideas from Kabir, the ideas, namely, of divine love, internal adoration of the divine, significance of man's inner experience in relation to his God, etc. Pound went to the extent of branding Tagore as a 'false coin'. "Now we know that he is a false coin", he said.[5] Nothing could be more mistaken than Pound's judgement.[6] However, Pound's judgement raises issues relating to intentions and expression of ideas in poetry, and above all hermeneutical concerns.

I propose to work out a comparative study of Tagore's Kabir and Kabir's own verse in popular Hindi or the dialect spoken around the holy city of Varanasi in medieval India.

Kabir was a weaver by profession, but he sang himself into a sect, protestant in intentions and practice. His songs are sung till today by millions in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. His ancestry might have been Islamic. The name 'Kabir' is certainly Islamic, but in North India, the name is often borne by Hindus as well. Kabir lived at a time when medieval India was being swept by the protestant movement, popularly known by the umbrella word '*bhakti*'. If *bhakti* denotes a worshipful attitude, often ecstatic in nature, casting away ritual and worship at alters of temples of a personal God, then Kabir did certainly share a lot with such protagonists of the movement as Tukaram in Maharashtra or Mirabai of Rajasthan. But Kabir cannot, by any means, be assimilated to Caitanya of Bengal or Mirabai. The former was a Brahmin by birth and a scholar of Sanskrit grammar, while the latter was born of a royal lineage.[7] Kabir was nowhere in the social hierarchy of Hindus, he was an outsider, perhaps an untouchable too, unlettered, only picking up intimations of wisdom and spirituality from the air of Varanasi, drawing from the twin sources — Hindu and Islamic. He was a folk figure, a grass root genius in the truest sense. In course of time he must have attracted people around him, and these people did not come from the elite class of Varanasi's society. They were common people, the toiling masses, simple and unlettered as their master.

Tradition has given us Kabir in two forms, strings of couplets or *dohas* and songs, rather devotional, known as *bhajans*. The later compositions are still sung by the sophisticated, who are in no manner related to Kabir's cult or sect. Kabir's works in couplets and songs are collected under such titles as *Sākhīs* and *Śabdāvalī* or *Padas*. Many of these *Padas* were collected by Acharyya Ksitimohan Sen from wandering Kabir panthis and compiled in four parts, published from the *Brahamacāryāśrama*, Bolpur in 1910-11.[8] *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, translated in English by Tagore are selected from the first three volumes of Acharyya Sen.[9] Referring to these as *Vāṇīs*, that is, *Kabirvāṇī* Hajariprasad Dvivedi in his work *Kabir* has commented that ''*Jo* (Tagore) *unhe is jogya janche ki bhāratīya manīṣā ke prati pāśchātya vidvāno kī upekshā aur avajnā ko dūr kar sakenge aur isliye jinkā angrejī anuvād unhone swayam kiyā. Yuropīya bhāshāon men inke anuvādon se kitne hi chotī ke samīkshak bhāratīya sādhanā aur sahitya ke viṣay men apnā mat badalne ko bādhya hue*''.[10] Dvivedi also mentions that the collector, Acharyya Sen had more trust for the orality of the *vāṇīs heard* from the *Sādhus* than the printed books. The orality of the text is an important hermeneutic concern.

III

Why is it that Tagore did not translate Mira's *bhajans* or Surdas'? What might have drawn Tagore to Kabir? Tagore believed that there was a folk tradition in India, untouched and unspoilt by the sophistry of Sanskrit professionals and emptiness of ritualism. The builders of the folk spiritual tradition often challenged the elite priests, as the Buddha did millennia ago, and they sang of the open road. Tagore believed also that these singers preserved and enhanced the spiritual wisdom of the *Upaniṣads*, lost for all practical purposes to schools of philosophy. In the poet's way, they brought the Vedāntic bliss or *ānanda* at the doorsteps of the man in the street. In his Oxford Lectures, *The Religion of Man*,[11] Tagore has argued that these singers were singing of ''man, the divine'', not of a distant, transcendent God. Tagore's philosophical faith appears to have driven him to Kabir. Earlier, Tagore has translated the Marathi *Abhangas* of Tukaram into Bengali, and edited a collection of songs of Lalan, the saint minstrel of today's Bangladesh. Tagore's translations of Kabir are properly speaking transcreations, enlivened by his ideology and philosophical faith. The phrase 'philosophical faith' is Karl Jaspers', and what Jaspers means by it is the over-arching framework of beliefs motivating one's life and work. Tagore had phases of monistic and theistic commitments, but he overgrew such phases. In his most definitive statement in the chapter called "The Man of My Heart" in *The Religion of Man*, he narrates his spiritual crisis when he felt that his own church (which was a form of Protestant Hinduism) was not congenial to his genuine and dear feelings. Tagore distrusted "organized belief", and felt that religious sects and institutions represent "an artificial average". In the light of his own statement, it is easy to aver that Tagore in the course of his translations steers clear of both theistic and unqualified monistic overtones in Kabir. He seeks to represent him in a form and manner of speech that might be acceptable to a cross-cultural or inter-religious audience. He does not see Kabir as the founder of a sect, but rather as a poet singing of, as we have said, "the man of his heart", "man, the divine", not of a distant, tanscendent God.

Tagore translated Kabir's songs into English prose verses similar to renderings of his own creations in Bengali. He did not translate Kabir's *dohas*. He was assisted by Evelyn Underhill, the noted authority of mysticism. But the fact remains that Tagore must have found a kindred soul in Kabir.

IV

We may now turn to Kabir as he is revealed in Tagore's translation. The issue that will receive our special attention is the question of the relation of a secondary creation to the original. Sometimes the gap between the original and its translation may be a little too wide as is the stand of T.S. Eliot in respect of Gilbert Murray's translation of Greek plays.[12] In the case of a translator so gifted as Tagore the limitations proceed from a difference of what his own verse is and what it can be in relation to Kabir. What concerns us here is what Kabir may lose in being translated, as Tagore did in his own case. The insistence on simplicity and directness, and a hatred of abstractions and philosophizing are Kabir's most marked characteristics. This is mainly a statement about the nature of mature experience. It is because of the directness of an approach to reality with the kind of monism which is implicit in his attitude of protest and rejection that Kabir is acceptable to his people. Rabindranath aspired for these virtues that were almost innate with the weaver of words from Varanasi. Certain ideas and beliefs he did share with Kabir. "God", says Kabir, in Tagore's translations, "is that Root; where all manifestations proceed ... happiness is yours when you come to the Root''. Tagore himself was under the influence of Vedāntic, Vaisnavite, Pantheistic and Transcendentalist ideas as Kabir, and his preoccupations with the poet's craft made him an ardent translator of Kabir.

But there are differences. Kabir was a humble weaver who passes into a sect because of his life and songs. Tagore was the versatile experimenter of many verse forms, and the business of translation, for him, was an important side-affair. This should set limits within which the translation could be judged against the original.

Vijay C. Mishra has criticized Tagore's translation of Kabir by closely analyzing one poem.[13] The first two lines of the poem are as follows:

bālāmu ābo hamāre geha re
tum binā dukhiyā deha re, etc.

Tagore's translation runs thus:

My body and my mind are grieved
for the want of thee,
Oh my beloved! Come to my house.

Mishra shows that Tagore makes Kabir conform to his own personal religiosity and the monotheistic reinterpretation of Hinduism characteristic of the Rennaissance, and that Tagore attempts to give Kabir's rather earthy use of language 'verbal respectability'. The raw, everyday imagery is transformed in Tagore's loose, mystical verse.[14] He also notes the polysemy of *bhakti* words as *bālāmu*, which means on the surface level 'husband', 'beloved' or *swāmī*, on another level reads as *balha* (*vallabha*), another name for Vishnu, or on another more significant level it means just *śabda* or word. It indicates that for Tagore, the tradition of 'receptor language' is much more important than that of the 'source language'.[15]

Kabir was a person of keenness of mind and sharpness of speech. He was ignorant of the written word. Tagore, on the other hand, has an area of experience vaster than Kabir's and he draws from an awareness of past literature in several traditions to serve his needs as a poet. He does, therefore, bring into effect part of his belief and experience in translating Kabir. Like Kabir, Tagore has a protestant element in respect of the values of the traditional religion. He admires Buddhism on that count. He seeks to bypass the demands of a stratified society and the external authority of religion. Kabir's *uneducatedness* needs to be properly understood. It is a falsehood. Like Ramkrishna's use of Vedāntic ideas, Kabir's use of such ideas is considerable, often and necessarily deeper than any professor of Vedānta. Kabir could glean from his associations with Guru Ramananda and the ethos around him in Varanasi. Tagore's *educatedness* is more of a derived influence, and it is limited in view of that awareness of an ineffable source of Reality. It was perhaps under Caitanya's influence in Bengali tradition that Tagore is led to an affirmation on the side of joy, *ānanda* in faith, even through the senses. Yet like the *Bauls,* Kabir attracts him as the example of a use of religion outside its authoritative fold.

Kabir's language must have been an impediment to Tagore. He was a master of his own craft. But what he puts into English is a new experience. Kabir goes by a dependence on the high and intense rhythm of a song, essentially untouchable in any other tongue. Tagore gets to Kabir in putting his songs into a form devoid of that ingredient of poetic form, music, tonality, rhythm etc., which constitute a song. Tagore himself is capable of high and intense rhythms in Bengali, but while translating Kabir he takes to the more sober medium of prose. Take the line from Kabir, ''*Pīle pyālā ho matwālā, pyālā nām amīrasa kā re*'' is done as ''Empty the cup! O be drunken''. This is hardly just to the export of feeling in the spoken idiom of Kabir's native speech.

Indeed, sometimes in Kabir, the verve and vigour of a localized idiom becomes so adequate in terms of the communicated effect that a translation appears to be begging the issue. Tagore is happiest at translating verse lines that are less localized to their idiomatic vigour and sharpness. For example for,

Suntā nahīn dhūn kī khabar
Anhad kā bājā bājatā,

we have ''Have you not heard the tune which the unstruck music is playing''?[16] The more literary as well as sophisticated approach to the original in translation is the gift of an educated sensibility. A lack of perception of a reality beneath the appearance is the main preoccupation in the original in these lines. Consider,

Jogī digambar seveḍa kapaḍā range rang lāl se.

or, *Man nā rangāye, rangāye yogī kapaḍā.*

Against the uneven and irregular tone of the original Hindi, Tagore writes, ''The yogi dyes his garments with red'', and for ''*Wakif nehin us range se, kapaḍā range se kyā huā*'', we get, ''If he knows not of the colour of love, what does it avail though his garments be tainted''? What Tagore contributes in spite of his handicaps is a clear communication of the experience and intention of the original.

What he lacks by way of tone and rhythm, he tries to compensate by supplying us with what he has himself created.

V

Left to himself Tagore can communicate simple and naked states of the soul at their keenest in poetry. But in trying to imitate a past mode of expression, as in Kabir, in such an apprehension of the Real, Tagore appears to be grappling with a derived influence.

In Kabir, the urgency of apprehending the Real is often and unmistakably expressed in the figure of a lover yearning for her beloved Lord. Tagore's familiarity with such yearning for God as the infinite, coming to him from several sources, makes him naturally sympathetic to such an experience, and thus he is able to transmute the physical to the process of faith. This view of the Real is characteristic of the devotional literature of medieval India. In Kabir, such an experience finds a poet capable of expressing the same. A complete subversion of the self in faith to God is born of a feeling of humility of the loved one for the lover. The bare commonsense of the weaver is used as a point of likeness for expressing a very different experience. But when Tagore renders Kabir's song (referred to by Mishra above), as saying, "O my Beloved! Come to my house ... Who is there that will carry my news to my Beloved? Kabir is restless: he is dying for sight of Him", he is actually grasping the complex wholeness of two separate experiences at some remove from the original, couching it in the language of the cultivated.

Kabir finds it convenient to express his urgent cravings through the symbolism of the beloved. His humility is unusual in respect of his manly vigour and sharpness of speech. His humility comes out in spite of his keen intellect and full grasp of a vital speech in all its liveliness and dramatization of the sensitivity. Let us take Kabir's locution:

Naihar se jiyarā phāt re

Naihar nagarī jinke bijaḍi,

Uskā kyā ghar-bāt re

which Tagore does into English as follows: "My heart cries aloud for the house of my lover; the open road and the shelter of a roof are all one to her who has lost the city of her husband".

The original is quite complex, whereas Tagore unduly simplifies the actual verse lines in Kabir's localized elements of a native speech. He intends a deeper disturbance than what Tagore's translation evokes.

Kabir usually achieves his 'objective correlative' (T.S. Eliot's phrase) in terms of the familiar and the homely, as in "*Hans hans puchou mātu-pitā saun, bhoren sāsur jāwā re*". The speech form here is oblique and dramatizes what is essentially the indefinable nature of his ecstasy. Tagore translates it in explicit terms. As a poet he must have felt that such a verse can only be translated in the manner he did it. "I tell my parents with laughter that I must go to my Lord in the morning". The rhetorical power that Tagore builds up for a sustainance of the personal and the general in experience comes to him in expressing that community sense basic to Kabir.

Abadhū begam desa hamārā
Rājā rank phakir bādśā, sabse kahaun pukārā
Jo tum chāho param pada ko,
Basiho desa hamārā.

This song sets us thinking on the issue, namely, how Kabir, in spite of his mysticism was not a loner, or in our own times, Ramakrishna could attract people around him even though he kept commuting between the domains of the empirical and the transcendental. In general, this is the issue of the mystic and the society, of how the mystic communicates. Adapting Kant's phrase we might suggest that the sensuous is the symbol of the non-sensuous. Kabir passes into a sect because of his mastery of a common participation of the kind possible for others as well. Tagore, on the other hand, was a reformer of taste and on this score, he was a loner. Translating Kabir he felt the difficulty in grasping the sense of a live human participation together, achieved in a poem that bases itself wholly on the power of a song to go by the way of mouth. Tagore was a loner spiritually, a master craftsman of words and sentences, and he was cut away from the highway of society, and thus, up against the commonplace mode of speech that he knew in the religious literature of Bengal. It should be expected that he could recapture the full tone and effect of *Abadhū begam desa hamārā* only as "Sadhu! My land is a sorrowless land". The translator has evidently missed the marked sense of a live human participation signified by the plural '*hamārā*' in rendering it in the singular.

A hermeneutical exercise is naturally called for. When Binodbehari Mukherjee painted his great mural on the medieval saints at Santiniketan, the viewers were surprised to find Kabir with features of Ramakrishna. That was the only possible image. How alike the two were in point of their speech and rootedness in a tradition! Any translator of Kabir should notice that there was a community sense basic to him and his followers. A loner like Tagore is a miracle, and whatever sect that might have been there around him is but a fake community, with a form of life that is hollow, lacking in content.

Notes and References

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Theories of Translation* (eds.) Rainer Schulte and John Beguenet, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992, p. 91.
2. *Theories of Translation, op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 9.
3. Tagore, R., *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, Macmillan, London, 1915. Reprinted in 1962, 1995. In one of his essays, "The Philosophy of Our People", Tagore informs us that he heard Kabir from a singer in his childhood. He also wrote a poem on a biographical anecdote of Kabir and also another on Kabir's master, Ramananda. These are compiled in Tagore's book of ballads, *Katha-o-Kahini.*
4. Pound reviewed Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* in the now defunct magazine, *Poetry*, edited by Harriet Monroe, in the July issue, 1915.
5. Almost a similar observation was made by Edward Thompson in *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist*, Riddhi, India, 1979 edn.
6. Such criticisms are vehemently opposed by Professor S.C. Sengupta, renowned Shakespeare scholar and literary critic in *The Great Sentinel,* A. Mukherjee, Calcutta, 1948. He considers them as a 'great howler'. According to him it is indeed true that there are ideas and images which Tagore shares with Kabir "but great as Kabir's poems are, they do not produce the same impression of rounded perfection, of harmony between heaven and earth, between form and formlessness that is the principle feature of Rabindranath's poetry". *Ibid,* pp. 233-234.
7. Mira often uses the language of iconography. She describes Krishna as *rājā*, king, with *makarākṛitikuṇḍala* on his ears. We may recall that Rajendra Chola, who was a naval power, had *makara* on his crown. Krishna, as Vishnu, resides in the sea, and so he has earrings embellished with the forms of *makara.* Such a way of describing Ram or Hari will be preposterous, so far Kabir is concerned. I owe this information to my former colleague, Dr. P. Roy, at the University of North Bengal.
8. Indian Publishing House, Calcutta, 1910-1911.
9. Keay, F.E., *Kabir and His Followers,* Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi, 1996 edn., p. 62. Also Hajariprasad Dvivedi, *Kabir,* Rajkamal Prakashan, 2003, p. 178.
10. *Ibid.*
11. George Allen & Unwin, London, (1931), 1970.
12. Eliot was a purist and in *After Strange Gods,* a collection of essays, he chided Gilbert Murray for taking liberty in translating Greek dramas in modern idioms.

13. "Two Truths Told: Tagore's Kabir" in *The Sants* (eds.), Karine Schomer and W.H. Mcleod, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1987, pp. 167-180.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
16. Compare Tagore's own verse and its translation into English:
    Torā śunis ni ki śunis ni tār pāyer dvani?
    Oi je āse, āse, āse. *Gītānjali*, poem no. 62.
    "Have you not heard his silent steps?
    He comes, comes, and ever comes". Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore, Macmillan, London, 1961 edn., poem no. 65, p. 21.

    I was benefitted from my discussions with Dr. P. Roy at different stages of writing this paper.

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11. Tagore, R., *One Hundred Poems of Kabir,* Macmillan, London 1915, reprinted in 1962, 1995.
12. Tagore, R., *The Religion of Man,* George Allen & Unwin, London, 1931, reprinted in 1970.

16

The Concept of Being in Indian Tradition

Raghunath Ghosh

The concept of Being can be taken in the sense of existence, which is otherwise called *Sat* in Indian tradition. The concept has been interpreted in various ways in Indian tradition. It depends on the nature of Reality realized by an individual and hence the subjective elements in understanding the same cannot be ruled out. It will be shown in the following paragraphs that the reality is of different types as realized by different individuals. The Reality seen by the Buddhists is different from that of the Jainas and Advaitins and hence the concept of being is also changing. In this paper an effort will be made to show an interlink among all the interpretations in a hermeneutic manner. Among the diversities a unique point admitted by all can be highlighted in favour of the concept of being.

It has already been said that the notion of being is, to some extent, subjective to an individual, which is evidenced from the following facts. The justification of our birth in this world may be of different types. To a section of people this justification of existence lies in the realization of Self. It is said in the *Bṛhādaraṇyakopaniṣad* that the thing, which cannot provide us Immortality, is taken to be non-existent one (*yenāhaṁ nāmṛtaṁ syāṁ tenāhaṁ kiṁ kuryāma*). The same picture is also found in the *Kathopaniṣad* where Naciketā did not find justification of his existence in mere enjoyment of wealth etc. and hence to him self-realization is only justification of his existence.

Again, the Jainas believe that Reality is of the probable form (*syāt*). To them the term *syāt* is used in such context in the sense of relativity and their theory *syādvada* may be translated as the theory of relativity. Reality or *sattā* has its infinite dimensions that are all relative, and some of them are capable of being known. All the sentences depicting Reality are necessarily relative, conditional and limited. This is not self-contradictory on account of the fact that the real nature of Reality is indeterminate and complex and hence affirmation and negation of an object may be made from *a different standpoint*. An absolute statement about the nature of Reality is erroneous. To them Reality is infinitely complex (*anantadharmātmakaṁ vastu*), and it can allow opposite predicates from different standpoints. It is real as well as unreal (*sadasadātmakaṁ*). If it is viewed from the substance, it is real, universal, permanent and one. If viewed from a different mode, it is unreal, particular, momentary and many. The Jainas are in favour of quoting the story of the six blind men and the elephant. The blind men touched the different parts of an elephant with their hands and tried to describe the animal after guessing the part only. The man who touched the ear of the animal described the elephant as a country-made fan. In the same way, the man touching the leg describes the same as a pillar. Another person who had realized only the trunk described it as a python etc. All the six persons were quarrelling among themselves regarding the real nature of the elephant, but a person who knows the real nature of the animal can realize that all the blind persons are noticing the parts of the elephant considering it as a whole. All philosophical differences are based on mistaking a partial truth as the whole truth.

Such type of Reality has also been admitted by the Mādhyamikas who think that Reality is *śūṇya* in nature i.e., indescribable (*avācya* or *anabhilāpya*) as it is beyond the purview of four categories of intellect (*catuṣkoṭivinirmukta*). It is Reality, which goes beyond existence, non-existence, both and neither. From the phenomenal point of view it means relativity (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and from the absolute point of view it means Reality (*tattva*). The Reality is indescribable because it is neither existent nor non-existent; the Absolute is indescribable because it is transcendental and no categories of intellect can adequately describe it.

From the above standpoint it can be said that Being or Reality is not of one type and hence it can be of any type depending on the ontological and metaphysical presuppositions of the believers.

By way of rounding of the concept an effort has been made to show that some social and ethical background prevails behind the formulation of this concept. The same social and moral idea remains in the concept of *sat* as propagated by the Buddhists, Naiyāyikas etc. though it is not openly written or discussed in their philosophical or commentarial literature. Here an attempt is being made to throw some light on this aspect, which seems to be apparently novel, with the help of some arguments. In this connection different meanings of the term *sat* have been highlighted. It has also been pointed out that these meanings have some bearing on social harmony and peace. In other words, the concept of *sat* is used in Indian tradition in the sense of *justified existence* as mentioned earlier.

An individual having *sattva* element may also be called *sat* in as much as the term *sattva* is derived from *sat* and hence, a balanced person can also be described in terms of *sat* as he possesses the balanced quality i.e., *sattva.* Let us try to understand the literal meaning of the term *sat*. The literal meaning of it is ‘existent’ or ‘that which is existing’. One who is existent is called *sat*. It may be argued that each and every living being is existent, and hence all the existent persons should be described as *sat* leading to the non-availability of the negation of it. In reply, it can be said that a man who exists physically is not taken as *sat*, but a man who has justified his existence is called *sat*. If a man does not perform any work, good or bad, he is not at all known to others, and hence his existence is not known to others or his existence is not justified in the sense that he has not made his existence ‘meaningful’. If a man is known to all and has made his existence meaningful by way of performing many social works, he is called *sat* or existent. This *sattva* or *sattā* (existence) does not mean a man’s mere physical existence.

It may be argued that a man may prove his existence negatively or positively. In other words, one may think to prove one’s existence after performing many antisocial and immoral actions like theft, decoity, murder etc. In this case can he be taken as *sat*? In reply it may be said such persons are negatively famous or negatively prove their ‘existence’ and hence, their existence should be denied for which they should be designated as *asat*. A man may be remembered due to some actions having some positive value in the society or he may be so due to some actions having negative value in society. The former is *sat* while the latter is *asat*.

It follows from the above discussion that through the performance of various duties in various spheres of his (towards family member, social members etc.) by way of performing good works like social welfare, service of mankind etc. our existence is justified and hence we are called *sat* who is otherwise known as honest. Let us try to understand the term ‘*satatā*’, the Sanskrit-rendering of the term ‘honesty’, which has originated from the term ‘*sat*’. If my relative gives me an object for my use, it would be my sacred duty to enjoy the use of it in order to show honour to him and to his faith in me, but not to destroy it. If I destroy the object without using, it is also a kind of dishonesty. In the like manner, our valuable 'existence' which we have got through natural courses should be made justified, failing which we may be charged as dishonest (*asat*) due to the misuses of our valuable property i.e. existence.

The physically existent person who does not perform his duties for the same of harmony is *asat*. Hence a father who is very much annoyed with his son who does not perform his duties or engages in doing foul works is generally found lamenting with the words : 'I have no son though he exists'. On the other hand, a man being satisfied with the service rendered by a gentleman with whom he has no blood connection is found saying 'I am endowed with a son though really I do not have one'. In the former case the son has got physical existence which is taken as tantamount to not having a son, while in the latter the son has not physical existence which is taken as equal to having a son keeping the duties performed by the person in view. In short, one who maintains harmony after performing different duties in different spheres of life is called *sat* or honest while the person doing the reverse is called *asat* or dishonest.

The Buddhists, I think, also believed in this concept of *sat*. They admit that an object is to be understood as *sat* if it has got some causal efficacy (*arthakriyākāritvaṁ*). In other words, an object is *sat* if it has capacity to serve our purpose and to fulfil any action. On the other hand, the object which does not serve our purpose is called *asat*. The jar, pot etc. would come under the first category (i.e. *sat*) as they have got the above-mentioned capacity. The hare's horn etc. is called *asat* as they do not have such capacity.[1] I believe that this doctrine which is applicable to this epistemic world can be extended to other places. In other words, behind the formulation of the definition of *sat* or *asat* and coinage of the terms *sat* etc., there is functioning some idea related to social welfare and sense of morality, which needs some focus here. These Buddhists notion of *sat* may also cover an individual who is described as *sat* in the sense mentioned above. A man may be described as *sat* or *asat* after keeping his *arthākriyākāritva* by way of doing social welfare, adopting *maitrī* and *karuṇā* etc. or *anarthakriyākāritva* respectively in view. Just as an object having causal efficacy (in the positive sense) is *sat* in the true sense of the term. On the other hand, our existence which is not endowed with such causal efficacy or which is endowed with causal efficacy in the negative sense is called *asat*. Hence, *sattā* or *asattā* of an object or of us is determined in terms of causal efficacy or non-efficacy respectively. To the Buddhists the human body is nothing but an object. As it is a body of human being, the *sattā* of it is determined in terms of causal efficacy connected with human value or social value, which leads him to the path of *maitrī* and *karuṇā*. Hence, the causal efficacy of human being is different, which is not expressed in an explicit way in Buddhist literature. The same idea can be traced when they described *sat* as *svalakṣaṇa* or unique. Just as the causal efficacy of water lies in the object itself, but not in the word 'water', the causal efficacy lies in human being, but not in the name, race or caste etc. possessed by him. From this it is understood that an individual has to prove himself as *sat* by his own causal efficacy in the form of good works, but not through his name, race, caste etc. Hence, the Buddhists have coined the term *kalpanā* in order to refer to this name, race etc.[2] They have preferred to mention them as *kalpanā* or imagination on account of the fact that they have no value in proving a man *sat*. A man having unique character and free from imaginary attributes is self-luminous. A man is *svaprakāśā* and hence, he does not need to mention his name, father's name, race etc. to make him famous or *sat*. If a person without doing any work related to the welfare of society claims himself as *sat* due to having his high position or high family etc., he is not taken as *sat*. In other words, a man who is self-luminous through his own auspicious deeds is *sat*.

The view has found its echo in the religious poem composed by Kabir, which runs as follows :

"Vāḍa huyā to kyā huyā
Jaise vaḍi khejur
Pānthako chāyā nāhi
Phal lāge atidūr"[3]

That is, what is the use of being born in a high family ? Just as a big date-palm tree has no significance to the society in as much as it does not provide the travellers with shadow and the fruits exist in such a high place that they cannot be plucked by the social beings, a man born in a high society or having high education etc., is insignificant to the society if he does not engage himself in auspicious works like social welfare etc. From this it is known that a man proves himself really existent by way of doing such good works, but *not* through his birth in high family or race etc. In this situation an individual can maintain harmony between his own welfare and that of social members and thereby he becomes *sat*.

For the reasons mentioned above the Naiyāyikas perhaps made a clear distinction between *śuddhasattā* (pure existence) and *viśiṣṭasattā* (qualified existence). The pure *sattā* (*śuddhasattā*) exists in substance (*dravya*) quality (*guṇa*) and action (*karma*).[4] It indicates that the real existence is not confined to the gross body which comes under *dravya*, but it is pervasive to quality and action also. If a man having body does not possess any mentionable quality and action, he does not have *sattā* in the true sense of the term, which is indicated by the term *pure sattā*. Here 'quality' and 'action' denotes the good qualities like social service, broadness of mind etc. and good actions like service of making, performance of the duties (entrusted to him) towards family or social members respectively. If there is harmony among body (*dravya*), good qualities (*gunā*) and good action (*karma*) in an individual, the real *sattā* prevails there. If a man having a good body does not have any mentionable quality and action, he has also a sattā which is not at all 'pure', but 'qualified' or *vaiśiṣṭa* which has got a second rate importance in the Nyāya system. That is why, they have not denied the *sattā* existing in *dravya* alone, which is different from quality and action (*guṇakarmānyatvaviśiṣṭasattā*), but this is not pure in the sense that the existence as *dravya* alone has not much importance in the family and social life due to the lack of harmony. As the term *śuddha* or 'pure' is taken as an adjunct of *sattā*, this type of existence is acceptable or desirable. To distinguish this pure *sattā* from other type of *sattā*, the Naiyāyikas are careful to use the term '*viśiṣṭasattā*' i.e., *sattā* qualified by the difference of *guṇa* and *karma*. In other words, the *sattā* which does not exist in *guṇa* and *karma* is called '*viśiṣṭasattā*' i.e., *guṇakarmānyatvaviśiṣṭasattā* which has got less importance in social life. This idea can be gathered from the fact that they have not described it as pure *sattā*, which indicates that there is *no purity* (i.e., impurity) in the existence. To describe *sattā* as pure or impure is based on the social values indicated earlier, which, I think, have prompted the Naiyāyikas to formulate the definition and classification of *sattā* in this way though this is used in the context of logical analysis of the definition of *Vyāpti*.[5] From the above dicussion it can be concluded that the pure existence (*śuddhasattā*) is real *sattā* which may be called *sattva*.

The same idea has been expressed by *Bhartṛhari* in the *śloka* of *Nītiśataka*, which runs as follows :

''Eke satpuruṣāh parārthaghaṭakāh
Svārthān parityajya ye
Sāmānyāstu parārthamudyamabhṛtā
Svārthā-virodhena ye;
Temī mānavarākṣakāḥ parahitaṁ
Svārthāya nighnanti ye,

Ye tu ghnanti nirarthakaṁ
Parahitaṁ te ke na jānīmahe''.[6]

This means, "There are some *satpuruṣas*, good people, who engage themselves in the good of others sacrificing their own self-interest; the *Sāmānyas*, the generality of people, on the other hand, are those who engage themselves in the good of others so long as it does not involve the sacrifice of their own self-interest. There are those others, the *Mānavarākṣakas*, devilish men, who sacrifice the good of others to gain their own selfish ends; but alas, what am I to say of those who sacrifice the good of others without gaining thereby any good to themselves or to any one else"?[7]

The *satpuruṣas* or good men have got their overwhelming goodness which is not at all vitiated by their selfish motive and hence they become glorified or they have glorified their existence. If they would engage themselves to serve their own self-interest without paying any heed to the welfare of others, they are not *sat*.

On the other hand, the people who destroy others' welfare in order to have more pleasure or comfort in their own lives are called *Mānavarākṣakas*, the devilish men or *asuras*. At this stage an individual tries to develop or satisfy his biological or physical needs, but fails to develop his morality though he has so called proper education. Due to lack of moral education a man dares to adopt unfair means in order to fulfil his own interest. Here self-interest is fulfilled sometimes at the cost of others' life. Hence, this type of people is known as devil in the form of man. The person having this devilish attitude (*asuratva*) is called as 'anti-social' who fails to maintain harmony with the society or social needs. But this type of man can be transformed to *sattā* from the world of *asuratva*, the devilish attitude.

It is true that at present day society the melody is completely lost due to having this devilish attitude in man and it can be regained if this attitude is removed. *Satpuruṣas* can be brought again. For this our nation's moral health is to be improved. Swami Ranganāthānanda observes: "The moral health of the nation entirely depends upon this immense group. Steadying itself by drawing inspiration from the small minority of the *Satpuruṣa* group above it ... the self-criticism which is evident in our nation today, and which is a sure sign of the basic health of our society will slowly generate the necessary moral forces to cure the nation of its present ailments. The ailment is a moral ailment and the remedy has to be a moral remedy. We all desire that our nation should be healthy, physically as well as mentally ... Cynicism, self-centredness and utter unconcern for others are more deadly than the most deadly physical diseases and viruses that cause them; for they corrode the nation's resolve to be free, to be united and to march onward to progress. We cannot be blind to the fact that this disease has already invaded our body-political, including our youths. We have to take energetic measures to arrest the further progress of this disease and to eliminate it from the body politic. And the nation has to be alert thereafter to see that these deadly mental viruses do not invade our society again''.[8]

The same type of human existence has been admitted by Ramakrishna when he says – '*janmechis jakhan dāg rekhe jā*' (i.e., you should keep some residue in this earth as a mark of your birth). In fact, it is advised to all human beings that they should justify their existence by way of doing some good works so that people can remember them after their demise. In this connection Ramakrishna had asked Vivekananda to become as big as a banyan tree so that other pain-tormented persons can come under its shadow and take shelter in it. The metaphor of the banyan tree is not a new thing in Indian tradition. In the *Kathopaniṣad* and *Śrīmadbhagvadgītā* the metaphor of banyan tree has been taken into account to point out that a human being should become as big as this tree having dense shadow protecting human beings and animals from the scorching sun. Apart from this the shadow in this context stands for solace to the pain-tormented persons. From this it is shown that the human beings like Vivekananda should not find satisfaction being confined within them or fulfilling their narrow intention, but they should be broader in heart and attitude so that they can provide peace, solace and well-being to others. It is the real mark of meaningful existence. The word 'meaningful existence' means 'justified existence'. The human existence can receive its utmost meaning if it can do something for the others going beyond his own self.

The Buddhist theory of being can again be substantiated in terms of its causal efficacy in the following manner. A section of the Botanists believe and justify that each and every plant is medicinal on account of the fact that all the plants including the negligible ones have got some medicinal value. To them some plants may seem to be redundant so far as their causal efficacy is concerned at very outset. But ultimately they will prove their causal efficacy so far as their medicinal value is concerned. From this theory a decision can be taken that they have got their places in the lap of Nature because they have some utility or causal efficacy either in the protection of the environment or in the protection of human beings. From the fact of their existence from the time immemorial it can be presumed that they have some contribution to the sustenance of this earth. Now-a-days the Zoologists also have properly realized the importance of the animals and insects for the protection of the environment. We now often come across with various Government organizations and projects like tiger project, crocodile project, etc., to save our assets in the forest (*banajasampad*). In fact, in the lap of Nature nothing can be redundant. Had it been so, it would have been destroyed absolutely without keeping any trace in the earth or keeping any chance of their survival. Hence, by the fact of their existence from a longer period of time it may easily be presumed or inferred that they have got causal efficacy for the protection of the environment and human beings, which again reminds me of the Buddhist phrase – *Arthakriyākāritvalakṣaṇaṁ sat*.

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Manjulika Ghosh is Professor of Philosophy, University of North Bengal. Her specialization includes Philosophy of Language, Ethics and Phenomenology. She edited the Proceedings of IPC and co-edited *Sabdapramana in Indian Philosophy* (under UGC SAP). She did her post-doctoral work from the Institute of Philosophy, Budapest as a Cultural Exchange Scholar. Her papers have been published in professional journals in India and abroad. She lectured in different Universities and Institutes in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Turkey, Hungary, UK, Japan and China.

Raghunath Ghosh, Professor of Philosophy and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Commerce & Law, University of North Bengal, Siliguri, W.B. is specialized in Indian Philosophy (classical and modern). He has published nine books, one hundred fifteen papers in different professional journals and edited volumes. Ghosh has widely travelled and lectured in different Universities in the Netherlands, France, England, Japan, Germany, U.S.A., Poland, Finland, Malaysia and Singapore apart from Bangladesh and researched with Professor Kuno Lorenz, University of Saarland, Germany under the auspices of DAAD. He was a Visiting Fellow in the Universities of Puna, Jadavpur, Rabindra Bharati and Midnapur and a recipient of Best Book Award by Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. He is also Academic Coordinator, SAP, Director, Buddhist and Ambedkar Study Centres, NBU.

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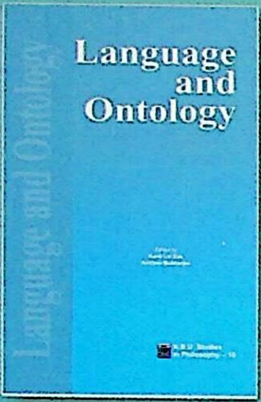
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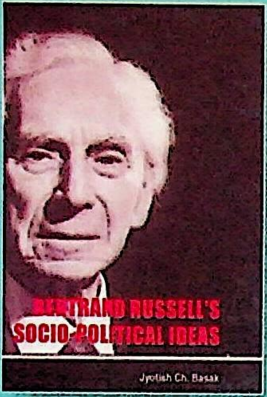
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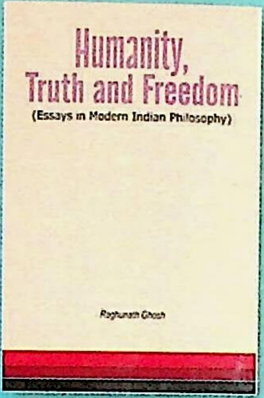
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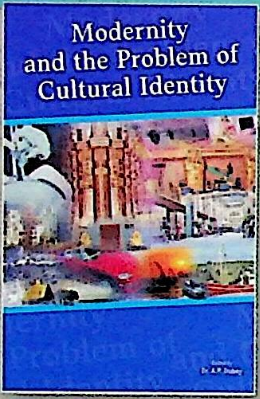
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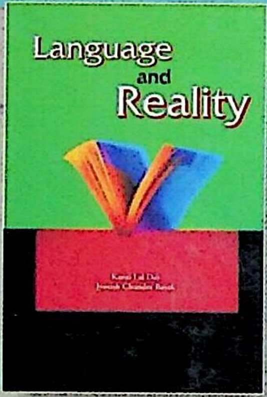
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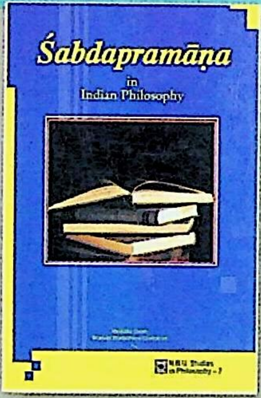
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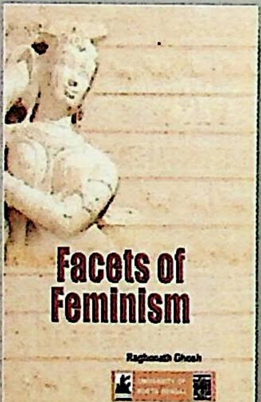
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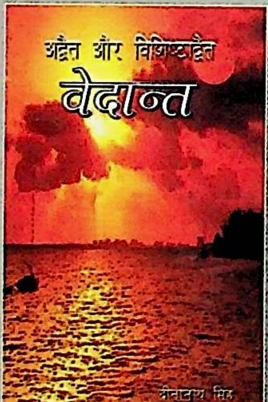
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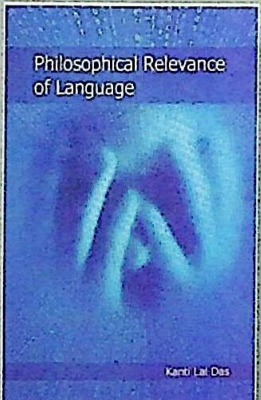
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